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"COME, NOW, AGNES, ONE KISS, AND WHY—I'LL SAY NOTHING ABOUT THE RENT."

\$50,000 Reward;

THE ROMANCE OF A RUBY RING.

A PHILADELPHIA HISTORY AND MYSTERY.

BY WM. MASON TURNER, M. D.

Author of "The Masked Miner," "Under Ball," "Silver Heels," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

BEHIND THE SCENES.

WHEN! How raw and cold was this bleak December night of 1867! This night, long to be remembered by some of those who play eventful parts in the story we will tell.

A scowling sky filled with half-gray half-lead clouds lowered ominously down upon the city, and the keen north-west wind swept along the almost deserted streets. Then a large feathery flake of snow; then another and another, hurried down; and the spectral atmosphere of the winter evening was filled with white-winged, scurrying battalions, grotesque and weird, flying higher, flying thither!

The hour was half-past seven; yet, though so early, out in the sparsely-settled districts of the large city, where the lamps were few, the darkness was already intense.

A female figure wrapped in shawls and other coverings, trod bravely on through the darkness of the street—through the gray snow-storm which howled around her. She had just turned from Catharine street into Twelfth, and as she faced the wind she shuddered and crouched closer to the walls of the tall, somber houses bordering on the way.

That woman was Agnes Hope, the actress, and she was on her dreary tramp to the Chestnut street theater, to play her part in the thrilling drama of the evening. She must hurry, too, or she would be late. Come what might she had to be present when the call-bell sounded.

More fiercely drove the wind along the streets, flinging the snow-flakes madly to and fro; more ominous grew the winter sky—more cold and bleak the breath of the storm.

But, the young actress still trod bravely on! The lights from shop-windows were now closer together, and their kindly glare seemed like welcoming beacons to her. But, her breath was going and coming fast; her bosom heaved, and her limbs tottered beneath her. She staggered on a few yards, and then, clasping her arms around the cold, snow-flaked iron post of a gas-lamp, she paused under the full glare.

The beams flared straight down upon her, and revealed a pale, yet beautiful face, bordered by a dark mass of clustering hair, shading it, and gathered away beneath the protection of an age-honored hood tied under the chin.

The eyes standing out of that wan face were wondrous dark—wondrous mellow—wondrous soft and fascinating. Yet they were not bright and sparkling this raw winter night; and the thin, half-blue lids were red with weeping.

The girl could not have been more than twenty-three—perhaps not so old, for the checked lines of care across the broad white forehead—the deep indentations around the mouth, clearly indicating suffering—the thin, almost cadaverous cheek—the frail, weak form, may all have added years to her looks, and given her a premature

appearance of age and contact with the world.

But, despite her coarse wrappings, despite the careworn, grief-stricken face—despite the despairing look of the large black eyes, Agnes Hope was a maiden wondrously beautiful.

"I must go!" she murmured. "I must earn my pittance, or what will become of us! And mother so ill! She is near unto death; I know it—though the physician tries to cheer me—to make me believe otherwise! Suppose mother should die, then I'd be left all alone in this great city, and in the wide, cold world. What would become of me? And that hard-hearted wretch who lets us have the two rooms in which we live! Live! Nay! starve were a better word. Would I, in such an event, be safe from his persecutions, or would I then—"

She paused; a shudder swept over her frame; and while she clung with one hand to the friendly lamp-post, she drew with the other the old shawl more closely around her shoulders.

But, the girl quickly recovered herself, and glanced around fearfully, as if she expected to see some dread image suddenly arise by her side.

"Then," she murmured, again; "in that dark hour, God pity and protect me from Willis Wildfern! I know my promise and his horrid oath! Would he dare do such an outrage? I could not return his love; but, he loved me, then, earnestly and truly. And—the other, so noble-hearted—so high-minded! I can scarcely realize that he is one of us! There is something so lordly, so lofty, so grand about Frank Hayworth!

"And in six months he has risen so rapidly, that he has taken us all by surprise. A bright fame awaits him, and Frank deserves it. But, as for me! Alas! alas!

"And to-night I must play that silly, shallow role, and laugh and sing, and joke and grimace! And my heart sick within me! For mother—poor mother—all that is left to me, is almost dying! A wild thought has sometimes flashed through my brain, and an indefinite fluttering at the heart, which I could not control—a yearning hope—a mad desire, as more than once I have seen Frank Hayworth's eyes bent kindly upon me! Does he think well of me? Does his heart kindly toward me?—toward me, friendless, poverty-stricken Agnes Hope? No, no; he pities me; that is all. He knows my sad tale, perhaps! He knows our wretchedness, and in his great heart he feels for me and for my poor mother. No, no, Frank Hayworth can not love me! I am not worthy of him, and then the tale he has hinted to me more than once! Oh, God! Have I been unguarded—have I been careless—have I forgotten myself, my humble position, and lifted my eyes to him? Have I dared to love Frank Hayworth! Good heaven! The answer that comes from my heart—'tis unmistakable! God pity me if I have given my heart to Frank! Yet, I could not help it! And he so kind to me! I would die if I thought he did not love me some. To-night we play in the same piece;

his eyes will beam so kindly, yet so sadly upon me, and he will speak to me! Yet, that other tale, at which he has hinted! Ha! yes!"

At that moment the far-off clangor of the bell on Independence Hall boomed heavily on the thick night air.

Breathlessly the girl counted the ringing strokes. She shuddered again; then drawing her shawl once more around her, she muttered: "Good heavens! Eight o'clock! I'm late! I must be gone at once, for I go on soon, myself; I must be there."

As she spoke she turned away from the lamp-post, and plunged ahead in the thick gloom. By this time the pavements were white in the spectral drapery of winter, and the jolting hacks and street cars, passing here and there, rumbled with a hollow, deadened sound.

Onward she hurried—her limbs tottering under her, her person thickly covered with the falling snow, her feet freezing, her pinched face shrinking under the cold blasts that roared by, until, at last, before her, its bright lamps glittering in the night-air, and flaring under the furries of the winter wind, loomed up the Chestnut street theater.

The girl paused, as two gentlemen coming up the street confronted her. One of them, a tall, stout, well-clad, bewhiskered man, suddenly stopped, as his gaze fell upon the white-faced actress.

"Ha! it is you my pretty Agnes!" he exclaimed, familiarly, chucking her under the chin with his well-gloved hand. "You need not draw away! I'll not mark you. You're late, though; the overture has just concluded, and the curtain is up; but—"

"Then do not detain me, Mr. Wildfern; I must hurry," said the poor girl, endeavoring to push by him.

"Why, Agnes, although you are in a hurry, yet you might say how-d'ye-do to your best friend! Come, now, Agnes, one kiss, and, why—I'll say nothing about the rent!"

As he spoke, he stooped quickly over her. But, he suddenly recoiled; for, like lightning, the little cold hand had resented the offered indignity by a blow on his face.

With a half-muttered oath Willis Wildfern turned away, and joined his companion, who was waiting for him.

"Not so easy, Willis, as you thought! Ha! ha!" laughed the other, as the two men hurried on and entered the theater.

Agnes Hope hastened up Twelfth street, and disappeared in the little alley leading to the rear of the theater. A moment more, and she was behind the scenes.

CHAPTER II.

A GREAT SHADOW.

AN hour before the events above recorded, a dim light burned in the humble lodgings of Frank Hayworth, the actor. These "lodgings" was a single room, and a small one at that, in an unpretending dwelling on South Tenth street, below Shippen.

Seated in front of a common table, in the little apartment, was a tall, handsome man, of some twenty-seven years of age. He held in his hand a small book containing the cues and his role in the play to be performed that night in the Chestnut street theater. But, the man's eyes were not bent upon the words he had to speak; they were roving listlessly, yet half-sorrowfully, around the limits of the little room.

If truth be told there was nothing especially inviting in that apartment. The ceiling was low, and the plastering cracked here and there; the walls were half denuded of the coarse, gaudy-colored paper, and a damp, moldy excretion stood out upon them. A small cheap mirror was suspended over the mantel, and above it hung a frame, containing a photograph of a gloriously beautiful girl.

That photograph, and its richly-gilded mounting, alone relieved the air of poverty pervading the chamber. A chair or so—an old lounge, with its tattered, faded upholstery—a neat, clean bed, a swinging shelf in which a few books were placed—and a common-painted wardrobe, made up the list of furniture, if we except a little stove, standing on the hearth.

But, about the appearance of Frank Hayworth, there was nothing to indicate the poverty which showed in the appointments of the lodgings. The young man was clad with a scrupulous attention to neatness and taste—not richly, it is true, but comfortably and well within the requirements of the stern dictator, Fashion.

Frank Hayworth was a handsome man. His head was large and well-shaped—the forehead broad and prominent, and shaded by thick clusters of jet-black hair, waving and gleaming. The eyes were large, dark and dreamy in expression; the mouth was completely hidden from view, by a long, sweeping mustache—darker even than the hair, if possible—which flowed down over the massive, iron-like chin. He wore no other beard.

In stature he was certainly six feet, and his form, though inclined to the slender, was, nevertheless, sinewy and well-knit.

The young man suddenly started, as a neighboring clock sounded faintly in his room.

"Seven o'clock already!" he muttered; "and I have not yet learned my role. This will not do! I dream too much, and I have forgotten my ONE GREAT OBJECT! I must be diligent, or I will lose all I have gained."

So saying, he bent his gaze on the part before him, and recommenced his "study."

Five, ten, fifteen minutes elapsed, and with a half-impatient, half-triumphant gesture, he cast the little book on the table before him, and rising to his feet, began to walk the narrow limits of the chamber.

"This done!" he muttered; "I know the part; and now will fickle fortune once more favor me? Will I, in my humble part, again win the pleasing plaudits? God grant it! I am going up. I am making a man. Success and money will yet be mine! Then, what but he will stand between me and my darling Sadie?"

As he spoke he paused and glanced at the photograph hanging on the wall; then a soft, yearning expression passed over his features.

"Yes, Sadie, you are my darling! For you alone I live! For no other woman has my heart ever pulsed! And yet—"

He suddenly ceased his soliloquy, as a look of poignant pain all at once contorted his face. His brow wrinkled into a deep, anxious frown.

"Am I speaking the truth?" he muttered, in a voice tremulous with emotion. "Can I search my heart, fully, and say that it has not warmed for other women than Sadie Sayton? Can I lay my hand on that bounding heart, and answer, truthfully, that my soul has not yearned somewhat, however little, for poor, poverty-stricken, angel-faced Agnes Hope! Oh, God! my brain reels as the answer comes back to me—that answer always the same, and ever ringing loudly in my ears! Is it true? Can it be possible? Have I ceased to love, as ever, my beautiful, devoted, fair-haired Sadie! Oh, no! A thousand times, no! Yet, at the name of Agnes, I can not help it! My heart does beat more quickly; the blood does grow warmer in my veins, and Agnes Hope's image is incised in my inmost soul! Do what I can, strive as I may, call ever so loudly on my honor and old-time love! pray as I may, that image is there, and I can not dethrone it! Why is this? Is it because Sadie is rich, and Agnes poor? Is it that, through human sympathy, I naturally turn to Agnes, and am awakened to her tale of woe and poverty? I am poor myself, and that fact made Sadie's father, the proud old Virginian, frown upon me; bid me, with a scowl and a menace, never again to darken his doors, unless I could come there as one who kept a bank account!"

The young man ceased his wild talk, and an angry flush swept over his smoothly shaven cheek. He strode up and down the limits of his little room, his eyes bent moodily on the floor, his hands clasped nervously behind him. He seemed to have forgotten his engagement at the theater, the role assigned him, and every thing else, in the reflections crowding upon him.

But again he looked up.

"Agnes Hope loves me! I know it; I feel it! Poor thing! Have I been guilty of encouraging her, or has she been brought near to me by the sympathy I have shown her, by the few acts of kindness I have extended her and her invalid mother? I must heed well my ways—must mark well my words, for Agnes Hope and Allan—myself—must never be more than friends! No, no, Sadie!" he exclaimed, turning suddenly and speaking vehemently, as his eyes rested

on the lovely face of the budding girl portrayed in the photograph likeness; "I will not forget nor forsake you! You have clung to me through all! You have braved your father's anger, and spurned his unjust restrictions! You are pledged to me, darling, and I will remain faithful to you, come what may! And, Agnes, though I will be your friend still, yet, I can be nothing more, cost what it may. But I will protect you; I will stand between you and that persecutor, Willis Wildfern. I will watch that man well; for, unless I am wondrously mistaken, there is about him something which will bear inspection—something which—"

At that moment the door-bell jingled sharp and loud below. The actor halted in his restless promenade, glancing again at his watch.

Instantly he turned, picked up his role, stuffed it in his pocket, and hastily drew on his overcoat. "I must be gone!" he muttered; "I come on in the first act; Agnes! she to play that mocking, giddy part! Well, well! the world is not always just in distributing its favors, and so with stage-managers in making up the cast! Agnes must play that flippant parrot's part! But, ha! Come in!" he said, as a sudden rap sounded on the panel of his door.

Instantly the door was opened, and a tall, portly gentleman, enveloped in overcoat and furs, his beard flecked with snow, entered the room.

"Excuse me, Mr. Hayworth," he said, hurriedly; "I come on business, and will not detain you."

"Yes, doctor; what is it? I am in a great hurry, and behind time now."

"Well, sir, knowing you to be a friend to Agnes Hope and to her mother, I have just called in to say to you, that that unfortunate mother is fast passing away. I do not think she will live through the night."

"Good heavens, doctor! And when were you there?"

"Not ten minutes since. I am now forced to go away for an hour or so to see others who need my care. I thought I would call and tell you, for Agnes, poor child, has gone to the theater, and her mother is all alone."

"What can be done, doctor? Agnes is already at the theater, I suppose, and I must go."

"Very little is to be done, Mr. Hayworth. But, just as soon as you can come, do so. And, my friend, if you have an opportunity, break the sad intelligence to Agnes, for her mother is dying."

"Dying?"

"Yes; she can not last longer than midnight."

"And all alone! Horrible! Oh, God, what an uncharitable world!"

The doctor turned toward the door; he had nothing further to say.

Promising, however, to return as soon as possible to the house of the dying woman, he opened the door, hurried out, sprang into his carriage, and drove away.

CHAPTER III.

BEFORE THE CURTAIN.

FOR several minutes after the physician had gone, Frank Hayworth, the actor, leaned his head on the low mantel and thought deeply. His head was throbbing, and his heart was sad and sympathizing.

"Poor, poor Agnes! Now is her cup full! And to-night—in ten or twenty minutes hence—she comes before an exacting audience in the part of a silly, shallow-pated girl! Alas! how few in that throng will know the trouble Agnes Hope conceals in her bosom! But, people care not! They care for their amusements, and they will not care for their money's worth, even if heart-broken, or are breaking, in the bosom of those who cater to them! Alas, alas, indeed, for 'Christian charity!' A rare article, truly!"

"I must be gone, else the curtain will be up before I reach the theater; and in that event there would be trouble. And to-night—yes! I'll wear the pin which Sadie gave me! My character will allow this privilege; and then it will remind me of darling, sweet Sadie herself. Yes, I'll wear it to-night; there may be luck in it!"

Speaking thus, he took out his pocket-book, and searching through the folds in it, drew therefrom a small parcel, and then the actor held up before him, between his thumb and fore-finger, a glittering diamond pin, in the shape of a hand—the stone being clasped by the tiny golden fingers. For a moment he gazed at the pin, and flashed his light several times in his eyes. Then, with a deep-drawn sigh, he unbuttoned his overcoat, and fastened the jewel in his shirt-front.

The actor was just three minutes ahead of Agnes Hope in reaching the theater that dreary night, and he barely had time to make the necessary changes in his attire, when the call-bell sounded, and he swaggered through a side-scene, and appeared, amid loud applause, upon the stage, as Hawkshaw, the Detective, in the thrilling play of the Ticket-of-Leave-Man.

And Frank Hayworth had already seen poor Agnes Hope, but had no time to speak even a word of greeting to the sad-looking girl, who stood awaiting her turn to appear upon the world's mimic stage as Emily St. Beaumont.

In one of the front, second-story rooms of the St. Lawrence Hotel, on this same night of wind and snow, a bright light gleamed forth in the gray gloom of the outside air. Within that room a young and radiant girl was walking moodily up and down, her eyes flashing around her, her lips pressed firmly together.

The hour was seven, and the maiden had

just returned from supper, and sent her serving-maid down for hers.

In stature this quietly woman scarcely reached the medium height; but the softness and haughtiness of port, the erect, dignified form, fully compensated for this—in fact, it might be deemed a deficiency. Drooping, womanly shoulders, a gorgeous, swelling bosom, indicative of a warm, glorious temperament; a taper, and yet a full waist, and withal a pleasing, decided plumpness of person.

These characteristics of figure marked the girl.

A well-turned, nicely-setting head, covered profusely with waving ringlets of rippling gold—a broad, white forehead, unseamed by line at all—arching brows of the same auburn hue—long, silken lashes fringing over large, dreamy, half-melancholy eyes of deepest blue—a straight Grecian nose, with a thin, aristocratic nostril—a ripe Cupid's mouth, even in its repose bewitching and fascinating—a prominent, rounded chin, sloping gracefully away, without an unsightly fold or crease—to meet the noble neck rising, swan-like, from the swelling bosom.

Such were the points of beauty about the maiden's face which caused one to look thrice at her, and then, with a sigh of sadness, turn away; sadness that all who looked could not possess!

Up and down the richly-carpeted room, she strode, her step growing more hasty. The longer she walked, the more she thought.

Suddenly she raised her soft left hand, and, by an impatient gesture, flung back the clustering ringlets, which had fallen en masse over her forehead. As she did so, a stone glittered in the light upon the lily-white forefinger of that small, peachy hand.

The flash of the ring-setting glittered in the eyes of the girl. She paused in her restless promenade, slowly lowered her hand just below the level of her eyes, and gazed intently at the ruby, glowing in the stream of light. A softer expression spread over her features—an intense love-light gleamed in her large blue eyes—the stern expression which had hovered around the closed lips fled away, and then, quick as lightning, a pearly tear stole down, stood for an instant on the soft, downy cheek, and then fell upon the ruby-setting, making, by the reflection of the liquid, the stone to glow with a quadruple radiance.

"Poor Allan! I have followed you hither; for I heard that one answering to your description was in this large, bustling city. It must be you; for—for there is only one Allan Hill!"

She paused in her low murmuring, brushed the tear-drop gently from the stone in the ring, and then flung herself into a chair, gazing all the time at the little band of gold circling her finger.

"Ten long months of weary waiting, of never-ceasing heart-ache, have passed since that black night, on the lonely wharf, he bade me good-by, saying that he would come again and claim me as his bride, when money would be in his pocket. He bade me be of good cheer, that he would certainly come again. But time has sped, and not a word! Is Allan dead? Oh, no—no! The thought would kill me. Is he false to me and my memory? I have been true to him—true under all circumstances—true, despite the frowns of an indignant and unjust father—true to him, in following him now blindly hither, just to be near him—to love him, to cheer him—if, indeed, he be here in this great city.

"The description of him was so accurate, so life-like, that it must be Allan. And though three weeks have passed since I arrived here, and I have not seen him, or learned any tidings of him, yet I can not go now, without knowing something definite. I must—Ha! Fanny is here."

She stopped speaking, as, at that moment, the door was opened, and a trim-looking negro girl, her head bound around gracefully in the proverbial Southern home-maid's style, entered the room.

"What's de matter, Miss Sadie? Been crying ag'in? Dat won't do!"

"I can't help it, Fanny! I can't help it when I think that I have been here, in this strange city, nearly a month, and have heard nothing of poor Allan!"

"Dat's bad, I know, Miss Sadie. But, de fact is, I think dat Marse Allan ain't here; and, to tell you de truth, Miss Sadie, I wants to go back home—back where I was raised. I don't feel right in dis great big city. And den, for dat matter, I don't believe, as I jist said, dat Marse Allan is here, and if he don't care 'bout you to let you know whar he is, why Marse Allan ain't no great shakes any way, and—"

"There, there, Fanny! Don't speak of him in that way. You don't know what a noble gentleman he is."

"Dat you is ag'in, Miss Sadie! Always takin' his part! Just like you! Why, I sometimes think dat old master, as I calls him yet, was half right in not lettin' dat young man court you, for—"

"Stop, Fanny! Do not let me hear you speak thus again," and Sadie Sayton's blue eyes flashed fire, and she stamped her little foot imperiously.

Fanny was evidently awed; she did not wish to anger or displease her mistress. She had played with Sadie Sayton, in old-time days, and the girl loved her "Miss Sadie," as a dog loves his master.

So she quickly said, kindly:

"Lord bless you, Miss Sadie! Don't

you know me better dan dat? I wouldn't fend you for five dollars—in gold, at dat! No, no, I loves you, Miss Sadie, and I'll stay wid you as long as you wants me. And, for dat matter, I'd follow you to old Satan, if we could only find Marse Allan!"

Sadie's face brightened, a happy smile came over her rosy mouth, and, taking the black girl's hand cordially in hers, she said:

"We mustn't quarrel, Fanny. We have been together too long now; and, Fanny, I sometimes think you are the only friend I have in the wide world," and the maiden broke down, and burst into tears.

"Dar! dar! Miss Sadie, don't cry! I tell you, dar, Miss Sadie! You make me feel bad, and—now, dar! I knowed it! I must cry too!" And the faithful negress bowed her swarthy face over the glorious, golden-tressed head of her young mistress, and sobbed too.

But, woman-like, the emotion in both mistress and maid was soon over, and suddenly Sadie said:

"Give me the paper there, Fanny. I will look over the announcements, as I may go out."

"Go out! and on such a night!" exclaimed the maid, handing the paper to her mistress. "Why, Miss Sadie, you'll catch your death of cold. I tell you it is snowing awful!"

But Sadie Sayton made no answer. She glanced over the amusement column in the newspaper for several moments.

"Yes, I'll go, Fanny, to the Chestnut! It is only a step from here, and I have long wanted to see the 'Ticket-of-Leave-Man.'"

"See who—what man?" asked the girl. "Tis a play—a show, as you call it, Fanny, and I would like to take you, but you must remain here and sit up for me. Now help me on with my sack and rubbers."

In ten minutes from that time the beautiful Sadie Sayton, well muffled in many wrappings, issued quietly from the ladies' entrance of the hotel, and stood in the street.

The girl shuddered, as the driving wind tore viciously by her, and as the scurrying snow-flakes struck her rudely in the face. But, hesitating only a moment, she gathered her skirts around her, and strode away upon the street bravely, in the face of the storm.

Ere long she stood at the box-office of the theater, and bowed politely to the agent, respectfully.

"We have only 'one good' seat in the house, miss, which is vacant, and that is in the orchestra, front row," said the agent, respectfully.

"Give it me," said the girl.

In a moment she had passed the green doors, and stood in the crowded auditorium of the theater.

Sadie heeded not the basilisk eyes of a tall man fastened upon her, but she hurried on.

That man, however, started violently, and drew back.

As the young lady took her seat, the curtain went up, on the first scene of the thrilling play; and there in the aisle stood the tall man, with his keen eyes still bent on her.

Then Sadie saw him!

CHAPTER IV.
HAWKSHAW, THE DETECTIVE.
SADIE SAYTON glanced again at the tall, fine-looking man, who, at a sign from the usher, had now seated himself on one of the steps, only two seats from the young girl.

A strange fascination, seemed to hang around this stranger; at all events, something seemed to impel Sadie to look at him covertly. His face was one wondrously familiar to her; and with it, there came to the girl a black memory—a memory which time and circumstances had almost blotted out.

Sadie started as she saw the burning eyes of the man fastened upon her, and she turned her crimsoning face away. She could not drive out of her mind those wicked eyes, so lingering, so yearning, nor forget that insinuating smile which played over the bearded face of him who sat so near her; and her mind was still traveling back.

"Could it be he?"

But the girl turned resolutely away; and then slowly the blush which had mantled her cheek faded out. Slowly the troop of black-winged memories fled away, when she bent her gaze upon the characters who had come upon the stage, as the curtain rolled slowly up.

We have stated that, to Sadie Sayton, there seemed a strange fascination about the man, who had followed her from the door of the auditorium, and taken his seat so humbly, not far from her.

We can not pretend to analyze the feelings which held place in the young girl's bosom; we can not tell why she could scarcely keep her eyes from this bold, impudent-looking stranger, who shone so in jewels and glossy broadcloth.

Suddenly, Hawkshaw, the detective, in blonde wig and auburn whiskers, entered upon the scene at the tap-room. When he spoke, in a rich, full voice, telling his suspicions of some of the parties before him, Sadie Sayton started violently, and bent her eyes upon the speaker.

Her ears seemed to drink in every word that fell from the actor's lips. A strange shade of doubt, of anxiety, spread over her face; and, unheeding every thing

around her, she leaned her head forward, and listened intently.

The man who sat near the girl noted the yearning look, the spreading pallor, the straining eyes; and then, as he shrugged his shoulders, a bright, intelligent expression flashed over his face, and a satisfied smile played over his mustached lip.

He had formed a conclusion.

The play proceeded. Then Hawkshaw strolled listlessly off the stage; and, at last, poor Agnes Hope, in the character of *Emily St. Evermond*, appeared. Then she was gone, and the act-drop went down for the first time.

So intense had been Sadie's interest that, oblivious to all her surroundings, she gazed upon the curtain long after the actors had disappeared. Then, with a long-drawn sigh and a half-sob, she recovered her self-possession, and turned around to find the basilisk eyes of the stranger fixed upon her.

For a moment she eyed him steadily, but turned away half in alarm.

Then the bell sounded—the whistle echoed behind the scenes, and the act-drop rolled up again.

But in this scene neither Hawkshaw nor Emily St. Evermond appeared.

We will, for a moment, go behind the curtain, and note a little life-scene enacting there.

Between two of the shifts, on the left, stood Hawkshaw and the girl, Emily. They were awaiting their turn to "go on."

Robbed of their cast-names, we recognize them as Frank Hayworth and Agnes Hope. Despite the disguise he wore, it was easy to see that the young man's face was overclouded by a sorrowful, painful expression. But as yet, he had not spoken. Agnes was looking at him wonderingly, lovingly.

"Well, Frank?" she said, in a low, sweet voice, and her eyes beamed warmly on him.

The actor understood that look, and taking the girl's hand gently in his, while his fine eyes rested pityingly on her face—that face so unnatural—so ghastly to him in the thickly-spread rouge of the character she was playing—he said:

"I wanted to see you, Agnes, for a moment, on business—serious business, Agnes," and he paused.

"Serious business, Frank? And with me? Well, go on, Frank," and the poor girl bent her head, as a crimsoning blush reddened still more her unnaturally-colored face, and a perceptible thrill shook her frail frame.

The young man knew well the emotions which were filling the bosom of Agnes Hope—he knew well that she, poor thing, had prejudged his "serious business"—he knew what she thought he intended to speak of.

Alas! poor Agnes! She little dreamed the tidings in store for her.

He still held the girl by the hand.

"Life is very uncertain, Agnes," he began, in a low voice—scarcely, indeed, above a whisper.

"What mean you, Frank?" asked the girl, suddenly, a deadly pallor overspreading her painted face, as a hideous thought flashed with the speed of lightning through her brain.

Frank Hayworth did not reply at once; but he gently pressed the thin, cold hand, lying so confidingly in his own stronger palm. He knew that the girl's eyes were fastened eagerly upon him. So, in a tremulous voice, he said:

"Your mother is—"

"What, Frank? Has anything thing happened?" and she clutched him with all her energy, and gazed wildly at him with her great, staring black eyes.

"Be calm, Agnes; control yourself, and listen to me. Time flies, and I must be brief. Your mother is ill, Agnes—very ill. The doctor was to see her not an hour since, and—be brave, Agnes—he says, she can not live through the night. There, there, Agnes; be strong, my poor girl, and—I have to go on now!"

He placed her gently in a seat—there in the silence and gloom between the gaudily painted scenes—and in a moment more, the young man sauntered again upon the stage, as Hawkshaw, the Detective.

No one in the vast, breathless throng knew the storm that was howling through the actor's bosom then. No one heard the low, stifling wail which quivered for an instant on the air!

But Frank Hayworth heard this cry, and it pierced his soul like a barbed arrow.

The play went on, increasing in intensity; scene by scene, act by act, and Sadie Sayton, more dreaming than waking, sat still and watched him who played the part of Hawkshaw.

Absorbed in the thrilling play—absorbed especially in the noble fellow who played the detective's role—Sadie paid but little heed to the man who so persistently, so impudently watched her every movement.

The climax of the drama was fast approaching—the act-drop had rolled up for the last time.

Poor Agnes Hope, now, as *Mrs. Green Jones*, pirouetted glibly with her stage-struck husband, the vender of veal pies; and not one in the house, save Frank Hayworth, who watched her with sad, sympathizing eyes, knew, the terrible, sorrow in her bosom.

Then the slides were shifted for the last time, and the closing scene revealed *Jem Dalton* and *Mollie Moss* on their burglarious

errand, and, following them like a blood-hound, Hawkshaw, the Detective.

Then the final struggle—then the victory of the detective; and the house rung with thundering plaudits, as, in the contest, the wig and beard of the gallant Hawkshaw were inadvertently and unintentionally torn away, and the face of Frank Hayworth, enthusiastic, triumphant and glowing, stood forth in the full glare of the footlights!

But, amid the wild cheers and clapping of hands, there went up from among the orchestra-seats a long, wailing cry.

Sadie Sayton had gazed in the face of Frank Hayworth; and in the actor's shirt-bosom, the girl had caught the sparkle and dazzle of a diamond of the first water.

Then the curtain went down.

Slowly the theater was emptied; the lights were being extinguished; but Sadie Sayton, her brain reeling, her limbs faltering, remained. "Near her, silent, watchful as a hawk, stood the bearded stranger."

The girl leaned down, and searched all around her. An exclamation of vexation escaped her lips.

"I have lost it! His gift!"

In a moment the man drew near her.

"Can I assist you, miss? Have you dropped any thing?" And he bowed low before her.

"I have lost a ring, sir; a ring with a ruby setting. I value it highly." And again she bent down in the search.

The gentleman at once busied himself, likewise, in looking for the lost article.

Suddenly a sparkle at his feet caught his eye. In a moment he had covered the object lightly with his boot; and then, as the girl was looking in another direction, he stooped, picked up the object, and in the twinkling of an eye, transferred it to his pocket.

"I am sorry, miss; but I fear the ring is lost—for the time, at least," he said; "but I will cause search to be made for it, and if found will see that you get it."

The girl pondered for a moment. She was loth to leave the ring; it had never been from her finger since that dark evening long ago, when Allan Hill put it there.

But, she saw that almost everybody had gone; so, with a deep sigh, she turned and attempted to move off.

She had miscalculated her strength; for, exhausted with the constant strain upon her mind; startled at the loud, strong voice of the man who played Hawkshaw; shocked at the unexpected discovery; depressed at the loss of the ring; frightened at the familiar face of the stranger, with its dark memories, she learned soon enough that her vigor was gone.

She tottered and sunk back on a seat. The man near her strode forward and took her gently by the hand.

"Allow me to assist you, hence, miss; they are closing the house," he said.

The girl rallied, staggered to her feet, and shrinking away from his proffered aid, reeled along the aisle, out through the green doors, into the lobby.

The man hung pertinaciously behind her. Suddenly Sadie paused, and facing him, said, in a low, unsteady voice:

"Pardon me, sir; but we have met before, I think?" And she raised her eyes fearfully to his face.

"You are right, Sadie Sayton!" he said, promptly. "You and I have met before; and, methinks, you have met that ranting actor too! But, if it be tidings for you, I'll tell you that he is to be married to the white-faced, sickly-looking girl who played *Mrs. Green Jones* to-night. Ha! ha!"

A long, wailing, heart-bursting cry from the poor maiden, and, flinging her arms up wildly in the air, she tottered and fell backward.

But Willis Wildfern, the man-about-town, caught the fainting form of Sadie Sayton in his ready arms.

(To be Continued.)

The Scarlet Hand:

OR,
The Orphan Heiress of Fifth Avenue.

A STORY OF NEW YORK HEARTS AND HOMES.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

AUTHOR OF "THE AGE OF STAGES," ETC.

CHAPTER XVII.—CONTINUED.

AFTER destroying the letter, Allyne Strathroy sat down and waited for the Slasher to recover his senses.

It was a minute or two before the Slasher blinked his eyes around him, and then it was in utter amazement. He could hardly realize his position. Finally his look fell upon the young man, who sat watching him with a quiet smile.

"Say, did you hit me?" asked the rough, rising slowly from his recumbent position.

"Yes."

The Slasher felt of his head in a stupid way, as if half asleep. "I feel as if I'd been kicked by a horse." Then he suddenly remembered. "Where's that letter?"

"That letter to you from Kidd. And the rough looked bewildered."

"Letter to me? You have been dreaming," said Allyne, quietly. "I know nothing of any letter."

Then the Slasher's eyes fell upon the fire; he saw there the ashes of the paper, and he instantly understood what had taken place.

"Curse it!" he cried, in anger, "you've beat me, but I'll fix you yet!"

"Oh, no, you won't," said Strathroy, coolly.

"Why won't I?"

"Because you are going to serve me."

"I'll see you—"

"No, you won't!" interrupted Allyne. "It will be as I say. You came here with a certain object. You have failed in one way but you will succeed in another."

"I don't understand," said the discomfited Slasher.

"You came here to get money from me. You tried force and you have failed."

"More fool I; but who in blazes would have supposed that you could hit that way. Why, you look as if I could take you across my knee and break you in two," growled the indignant rough.

"Appearances are deceptive, sometimes," returned Allyne. "Now listen to me. I want a service done and I am willing to pay well for it. I think that you are just the man to perform that service, Mr. John Duke."

"Hallo! do you know me?" Duke asked, in astonishment.

"Oh, yes."

"Well, I thought I'd met you somewhere, but I couldn't remember where it was," said Duke, rather puzzled.

"We have never met," said Allyne, coldly. "I saw your picture once in one of the illustrated papers and a slight sketch of your life. I recognized the notorious Slasher, the shoulder-bitter, the moment I saw you."

"Those blasted papers are allers poking their noses into other people's business," said Duke, with a growl.

"Yes, if I remember right, your life was in the *Police Gazette*.

"Light and entertaining readin', murders and sich like," remarked the Slasher, with a grin.

"And for the service I want done—"

"What is it?"

"There's a certain man in this city that I don't like—"

"Oh!"

"It would please me greatly if I should read in the newspapers some morning that he had fallen down and broken his neck," said Allyne, carelessly.

"Jest so," responded the Slasher, who perfectly understood the young man's meaning.

"In fact the intelligence would please me so much that I would be willing to pay for the pleasure."

"How much?" The Slasher was coming down to business.

"What do you suppose it would be worth?"

"That depends a good deal upon who the man is," replied the Slasher, thoughtfully. "If it's a rich cove that there'll be a fuss kicked up about, and who will be difficult to get at, it's worth a high figure, 'cos there's the risk."

"This man is an actor, now playing at a Broadway theater; his name is Edmund Mordant. It will be easy enough to get at him, for of course he leaves the theater late at night. There's little risk."

"That's so," said the Slasher. "Is five hundred too much?"

"I think so."

"I'll have to have three or four more for to make a sure thing of it. Say three hundred."

"It's a bargain," replied Allyne.

"All right. Now I just want a line or two 'bout the affair. We'll fix it as they do at Albany, where you know they can't be bribed. Just you bet me three hundred dollars that this Mordant won't die for three months."

"Well," said the Slasher, with a grin. "You'll lose the bet inside of a week."

"Yes, I understand." So Allyne drew out the bet in sporting style and gave it to the rough, said that worthy, suddenly, as he was about to depart, "have you ever been in politics?"

"No," replied Allyne.

"Well, you oughter go right in. A man that kin hit as hard as you kin—why, there ain't an office in New York that you couldn't get. You go in—you'd be mayor in no time."

"Now, Mordant, if you escape this time, heaven itself protects you," Allyne exclaimed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AFTER the interview between Allyne Strathroy and Blanche Maybury, wherein she had shown such firm determination not to become his wife, Allyne had written to Mr. Chubbet to call at his earliest convenience. And in obedience to that request, on the evening of the day on which the interview between Strathroy and the Slasher had taken place, the old lawyer called at the Strathroy mansion.

Allyne gave him the full particulars of the scene that had taken place between Blanche and himself, and at the end of the recital asked the lawyer's opinion.

"My dear boy," said the old lawyer, in his usual placid way, "I don't really know what to say or what to advise in the matter. A woman is such a queer mortal—"

But he thought the best plan is for me to see Miss Blanche. After an interview with her, why I may be able to form some idea of what is the best course to pursue."

"You will find her willful—headstrong," replied Allyne.

"If that be so, we must find some way,

to make her obedient," said the lawyer, significantly.

"Very well. I'll speak to one of the servants and have Blanche informed that you are here." And Allyne rose and left the parlor.

"He is a remarkably smart young man," said the old lawyer, after Allyne had departed. "I'm afraid that we are going to have trouble with this girl. Ah!" and the lawyer heaved a deep sigh. "Women are so unreasonable. They never know what is good for them."

The lawyer did not have much time to meditate, for in a few minutes after Allyne's departure, Blanche entered the room.

"My dear Miss Blanche," said the lawyer, rising in haste and shaking hands with her, warmly. "I am truly delighted to see you. Ah! my dear child, I think you grow more and more lovely each day. You can not conceive what a joy it is to my heart to think that I am a humble instrument—should have the care—I do not think that I am putting it strongly when I say the sacred care—of such a tender flower as you are. Ah, my dear child, we have but little in this world. As the poet says, 'we have but little here below, but want that little strong'—I mean, 'long'. My dear Miss Blanche, pray be seated. I have something of the greatest importance to say to you." The lawyer was commencing his attack with a dose of flattery. It was his favorite saying, "tell a woman she is beautiful and your cause is half won."

Blanche sat down. She had a slight suspicion what the subject of the lawyer's conversation would be.

"My dear child, watching you grow up, as I have, from child to girlhood, and being besides your guardian, I feel toward you the affection of a father. I have, of course, as is but natural, a great desire to see you happily settled in life. And I thought that that desire would be realized in your marriage with Allyne. My dear Miss Blanche, had you considered fully of the matter that you spoke to me about the other day?"

"In regard to Mr. Strathroy?" Blanche asked.

"Yes, my dear."

"I have considered it fully," Blanche answered, firmly.

"And is your mind still the same?"

"Not to be his wife?—yes."

"My dear, I am terribly afflicted to hear you say so. You can not imagine the anguish that Mr. Allyne is suffering. You have caused that unhappy young man to give himself up to despair. My dear Miss Blanche, don't you think it possible that you will change your mind?" said the lawyer, in his blandest tones.

"No."

The single word, so easily comprehended, so difficult to understand, convinced the lawyer that it would be no easy task to change Blanche's mind.

"But, my dear, I really can not understand why you should have such an objection to fulfilling your contract with Mr. Strathroy."

"I do not love him."

"Ah, my dear, don't you think you are acting a little hastily in this matter?" Here was a chance for special pleading and the lawyer took advantage of it. "Love, you know, my dear, is such a peculiar sort of a—of a—What shall we call it? Passion? Well, passion will do. We never know exactly when it comes or when it goes. It is mysterious—incomprehensible; and, my dear child, I have really come to the conclusion that in this life of ours those couples are happiest that get along without any love at all."

"It is no wonder that a lawyer should think that way," said Blanche, with a half-smile.

"Why so, my dear?" asked Chubbet, who did not guess the drift of her words. "Because, if all the people that married truly loved each other, there wouldn't be so many divorce cases, and, of course, not half so much work for you legal gentlemen," responded the girl.

"Ah, yes—yes—my dear." The lawyer felt the force of the retort, and, baffled at one point, tried another. "But, my dear, remember that you forfeit your fortune if you do not marry Allyne. It is a great deal of money to give up. You will be poor—it's a horrible thing to be poor."

"I would rather be poor than married to a man that I can not love," returned Blanche, warmly.

"My dear child, such sayings as that are all very well in novels and on the stage. We expect, of course, all sorts of fine things of that order; but, in real life, it's quite different. Now, just look around you at the young ladies of your acquaintance. The first thing they say when they speak of a young gentleman is, 'is he handsome?' that's when they are thinking of a flirtation; but the moment they think of matrimony the question changes into, 'is he rich?' has he got money? Love, my dear, is all very well in the abstract, but you've no idea how much better it is when coupled with plenty of money."

"I am afraid that if I do not marry for love I shall never marry at all," said Blanche, decidedly. "I am not sentimental enough to want to marry a man who can not support me and to whom I shall be a burden; but, I think that a wife, who truly loves her husband, is very rarely a burden to him, if sickness does not drag her down. I have fully decided upon my course. I have thought over it long and earnestly."

"And that course is?"

"Not to marry Allyne Strathroy, even though my decision strips me of my fortune and I have to work for my daily bread." The frightened color in the girl's cheek, the sparkle of her eye, and the firm, decided tone of her voice, told that she was fully in earnest.

"Work?" exclaimed Chubbet, in horror. "My dear child, you don't know what work means!"

"Do I not?" asked Blanche, with a smile; "then I suppose I must find out. There are thousands of girls in New York who work—and work hard, too, for their bread. I don't know that I am any better than any one of them. I think that there is something noble in a woman's fighting the world for her life, not depending upon a man's strong arm for support. It's—its pluck—that's the word I want; and I never pass a work-girl in the street with her quick, cheerful step, and her bright, earnest face, but I feel a strong inclination to take her in my arms and kiss her as a sister, better and worthier than I."

"My dear, I always feel that way myself," said the lawyer. "I respect them, I admire them; but they're brought up to it—used to it. Now, what can you do to earn your living?"

"Use some of the gifts that heaven has given me," replied Blanche. "I am an excellent musician—or, at least, everybody says so."

"And you would teach for a living?"

"Yes."

"This is dreadful!"

"Better than to marry a man I do not love," replied Blanche.

"Well, my dear," said Chubbet, rising, "I am sorry. I must see Allyne, and try and console him. Good-night, my dear."

And the lawyer passed out of the room.

"The infernal obstinate little devil!" he muttered, as he ascended the stairs. "Women are all alike; as the poet says, 'saints in their parlors, what d'ye call it' in their kitchens?" Like a cat's back, smooth enough one way, stroke it the other and the teeth and claws appear."

The lawyer found Allyne in his room.

"Well, what success?" he asked.

"None at all, my dear boy," answered the lawyer, with a shake of the head.

"She is obstinate?"

"As a mule."

"What is to be done?"

"My dear boy, I have a plan," said the lawyer, after thinking a moment. "It has just occurred to me. I have a friend up-town—a doctor by profession, a most excellent man, but he has been unfortunate. He was in practice in some little place in Maine, but, unluckily, a patient happened to die while under his treatment. This patient was an old and tolerably well-to-do man. When his will was produced, it was found that he had left the doctor some twenty thousand dollars—nothing but natural, of course, considering the doctor's care and skill. Would you believe it? The heirs—of the old gentleman—nephews, nieces, etc.—kicked up a row—swore that their relative was insane; in fine, broke the will, and made such a noise about it—they even went so far as to say (and I believe they proved it, too) that the doctor held the old man's hand and guided it across the paper when he signed the will—that my friend was obliged to leave that part of the country. He came to New York and established a sort of a private lunatic asylum. It's near the North river, in Manhattanville. His patients are those sent there by their friends, who do not desire to send them to a public asylum. They have the best of care, and are kept strictly private."

Allyne guessed the lawyer's scheme.

"And you propose?"

"To take Miss Blanche out for a ride some afternoon; stop at the doctor's place—it's like a private country house, so she will have no suspicions—take her in; explain that it's a friend's residence, and after she is inside, give her into the doctor's care as being a harmless lunatic."

"But, will he receive her without a physician's certificate?"

"Certainly; he's a doctor—can't he tell at a glance that she's insane, particularly when I tell him so?"

Allyne fully understood the character of the doctor's establishment.

"As long as the patient was paid for, the doctor could easily detect insanity."

This is not fiction that we are writing, but fact. The recent release of an esteemed citizen from such a horrible den must be still fresh in the recollection of our readers.

And so the plot was arranged between Allyne and the old lawyer.

There was no friend to warn Blanche of the terrible danger that menaced her young life.

CHAPTER XIX.

ENTERING THE SNARE.

It was a bright, pleasant afternoon.

Lysander Chubbet, Esq., seated behind a pair of handsome grays—for the old lawyer was partial to horses and drove as neat a pair as ever beat three minutes in Harlem lane—drove up to the Strathroy mansion.

Mr. Chubbet dismounted and ascended the steps. The door was opened by Allyne, who, from the parlor window, had watched the approach of the lawyer.

"Delightful afternoon, Mr. Allyne," said the lawyer, briskly, as he entered the house.

"Yes," responded Allyne, as he led the way to the parlor.

"Well?" Strathroy questioned, after they had entered the room, "are you about to put the scheme you spoke of in operation?"

"Exactly," replied the lawyer, with emphasis.

"Then you are—"

"About to ask Miss Blanche to take an airing with me as far as King's Bridge," said the lawyer, with a cunning smile.

"Have you made all the arrangements then?"

"Precisely," replied Chubbet, rubbing his fat palms together with an air of great satisfaction. "I drove out to my friend's place this morning, explained to him the nature of Miss Blanche's malady, and he readily consented to receive the young lady and place her under treatment. The terms will be thirty dollars per week."

"Cheap enough," observed Allyne, "considering the risk."

"Risk?" interrupted the lawyer, in astonishment, "what possible risk can there be?"

"Why, if it should be discovered by any chance that Blanche is not insane—"

"Yes, but, my dear young friend, there isn't the least doubt about the young lady's insanity," said the lawyer. "Doesn't she refuse to fulfill her contract with you? Doesn't she declare that, rather than marry you, she will give up her fortune? Mr. Allyne, with these facts I would go before any jury in the world, and I shouldn't have the least fear regarding the verdict. Besides, then, you see, mistakes will happen. The young lady may be insane now, and at some future time recover her senses. It is not improbable in the least. The actual fact is, one-half of the world differ from the other half as to what constitutes insanity. To put it in a clear light, so that you will understand it, I will suppose a couple of cases. Two sailors, both under the influence of liquor, engage in a quarrel; one stabs and kills the other; the sailor is convicted of murder, and hung. Two prominent politicians engage in a quarrel; they meet, one falls by the hand of the other; the survivor is tried, he is insane at the time, and a jury of his peers acquit him. Do you see the difference?"

"No, I confess I do not," said Allyne.

"Well, you are not an intelligent jury," replied the lawyer.

"Then you think that there isn't any danger?"

"Not the slightest. In the first place she will never leave the doctor's house until she is your wife. Then she can make all the complaints that she likes. Wives like to complain, you know; it's woman's nature; they wouldn't be happy unless they were suffering. Such is my experience with the sex," said the lawyer, philosophically.

"You will take her to the doctor's house right away?"

"Yes, after a short drive," replied Chubbet; "once she is in the house, she won't get out again easily, unless she consents."

"But, suppose she should refuse to become my wife even then?" asked Allyne.

"My dear young friend, people that are insane are not supposed to have any mind of their own," replied the old lawyer, with a significant wink; "therefore, if she is obstinate, and will not consent, why, she will have to be married without consenting."

Lysander Chubbet was not a man to allow a woman's weak will to interfere with his plans, evidently.

"I'll send Blanche down to you," said Allyne. "You have no doubt about succeeding?"

"Not the slightest," answered Chubbet, firmly.

Allyne left the room, and in a few minutes Blanche entered.

"My dear Miss Blanche," cried Chubbet, rising and greeting her with warmth. "I was passing the house with my grays for a little ride up the avenue, and I thought that perhaps I could induce you to go with me. You really look as if you needed fresh air."

The lawyer spoke the truth, for Blanche did not look well. The roses had faded from her cheeks, and there was a faint blue line beneath the eyes that told of care and sorrow.

It is no easy task to tear the first love of a young girl's life from her heart; and when her own will is the instrument that does the deed, it seldom fails to make the cheek pale and the white forehead show the line of care.

"No, I do not feel well," Blanche replied, truthfully.

"Then, my dear, you must positively come with me, and try a little fresh air. Come, it will do you good."

"Will you wait a minute until I dress?" asked Blanche, who thought that the drive would do her good, and perhaps relieve her mind for a few minutes from the sadness that weighed so heavily upon it.

"Certainly, my dear; with pleasure," replied the lawyer, in his blandest tones.

So Blanche ran upstairs to dress, and a "A minute!" muttered Chubbet, after she had left the room. "she means an hour. I never knew a woman to dress herself under an hour in all my life." The old lawyer evidently was prejudiced against the fair sex.

"So far, so good," chuckled Chubbet to himself. "Once I get her into the hands of Doctor Fondell, I rather think that I shall finger a check signed by Mr. Allyne Strathroy for a nice little sum of money. It will be about the easiest earned money

that ever came into my hands. This foolish child to think—even for a single moment—that she could defeat the purpose of a man like myself! I rather fancy, from what Allyne said, that his interview with her the other day was a little stormy in its nature. Ah! these young people will be rash. Now, I adopted the soothing system with her—soft words—honey, not vinegar. The consequence is, she trusts me, while she probably fears him. See the advantage of my system! Besides, it's a great deal more pleasant to use."

Not a single particle of remorse was in the breast of the old lawyer as he thought over the trap that he had planned to snare the feet of the orphan heiress. His was a nature utterly gross. Greed and cunning were its two leading attributes. There are many like Lysander Chubbet in this world, hiding the false heart beneath the mask of benevolence and pity.

Blanche did not take an hour to dress, as the old lawyer had anticipated, but in some ten minutes came down attired for the drive.

"Ah, my dear Miss Blanche," cried the lawyer, rising, "I will undertake to bring the color back to your cheeks before I bring you home again." And as Chubbet did not intend to bring her home again, it was not a rash saying of his.

"I am all ready," Blanche said.

"So I perceive, my dear," said the lawyer, leading the way to the street. "I declare I shall have all the young men on the avenue envying me this afternoon, when they see what a charming companion I have."

"You are flattering me," said Blanche, a faint smile upon her pale features.

"Not at all," responded Chubbet, quickly. "Egad! I don't blame Mr. Allyne for being unwilling to resign you. I should find it a hard task, I think, if I were in his place."

Blanche did not reply, but the shrewd eyes of the lawyer noticed that the smile faded from her lips, and a sad expression came over her face at the mention of Allyne's name.

"No hope for my young friend, Allyne, of her own free will, I fear," thought the lawyer, as he assisted Blanche into the carriage.

Blanche seated the lawyer jumped in quite nimbly for one of his years and weight, for Lysander Chubbet was far from being a spare man; good living and rich wines had made the lawyer plump, and his full round face, testified beyond a doubt that fasting was foreign to his nature.

Chubbet took up the reins and the grays started off at a gentle trot up the avenue.

"By the way, my dear Miss Blanche—excuse the question—but have you fully made up your mind in regard to Mr. Allyne?" the lawyer asked. He had a desire to know if there was a chance for success without putting into practice the scheme he had formed.

Again the expression of pain came over Blanche's face. The lawyer noticed it. He was watching the girl with the same sort of curiosity with which the savant looks upon the agonies of an animal that he has drugged to learn the power of some new poison.

"Yes," Blanche answered, slowly.

"Then there isn't any hope that I shall some day see you the wife of my young friend?"

"No." White were the lips that pronounced the little word, and painful was the effort.

"Ah!" and the wily old lawyer gave utterance to a deep sigh, "you can not imagine how I am pained by this intelligence. I had hoped to see you—as the poet says, 'two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat—that beat for nobody else.' As usual, Chubbet forgot the end of the quotation.

"No, it can never be," said Blanche, sadly, but firmly.

"But I can not understand the reason for this sudden change," observed the lawyer.

"I can not explain it, even to myself," replied Blanche. "All that I can say is, that I have changed. I do not love Allyne any longer. He does not seem to me to be the same man that he was. His whole nature has changed. It seems to me like a horrid dream, and that—like the old fairy stories—some dreadful monster, some wicked spirit has taken possession of Allyne. I know that to think in such a way is folly, perhaps madness; but, I can not think otherwise. When I look at him now, I see Allyne's face; when he speaks, I hear Allyne's voice, and yet I know that he does not possess the heart that I once loved. That has changed."

The girl was right. A scarlet crime had changed the whole nature of Allyne Strathroy.

As they rode onward, Chubbet felt that his plan must be tried.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 20.)

The Fatal Dispatch.

BY LINCOLN LYLE.

RICHARD THOMPSON reeled along the streets of Bloomfield, a cozy little village of the West, in a state approaching intoxication. The worthy residents were astounded. Never before had this model man, the husband of the handsomest girl in the village, and moreover the strongest

advocate of temperance, even touched, tasted or handled alcoholic stimulants of any description.

Thompson, the telegraph agent of the station, always had borne the reputation of an honest, steady young man, in whom perfect confidence could be placed. About a year previous, he had won the affections of a noble-hearted brunette, by name Marion Marie, daughter of Squire Marie, justice of the peace for the county in which he resided. The squire had confided the care of his daughter freely to young Thompson, remarking "that a worthier man never trod the earth."

Thus it was the villagers were astonished at Thompson's inebriation. Undoubtedly there was a cause of some most powerful nature. The surmise was right; there was a cause, which consisted of but a scrap of paper. It was just this: On leaving the office at dinner-time, Thompson picked up a piece of paper, lying crumpled and crushed in front of his door. Too well he recognized the handwriting of his wife. There was the peculiar back-hand slope, also the singular formation of the initials "M. M. T.," which could not be counterfeited except by a skilled penman. The words were but simple—"Tom—All right. The coast is clear. 9 P. M. train—M. M. T."

All was clear as daylight now to Thompson. An elopement was contemplated with Tom Thornby, who, until lately, was his bosom friend. The peculiar nervousness manifested by his wife when Thornby was present, and the sly glances, supposed by them to be unobserved, now flooded Thompson's mind with confirmation strong as holy writ.

Nerves of iron could scarcely have withstood the shock, and the telegraph operator sunk beneath the blow. A dull pain shot through his head at intervals, and he feared his reason would give away.

His dinner was eaten by merely a mechanical effort, and business duties were resumed. But one sentence was impressed in burning letters of fire upon his heated imagination—"All right. The coast is clear."

Gradually the day passed away. Thompson was obliged to be on duty till eleven o'clock that night on business connected with the trains. The road had been torn up and relaid with new rail at that point, and prompt notice was required of the completion. An accident had happened by which the repairs were delayed a few hours, and therefore the trains were compelled to wait at the next station below.

Half-unconscious, Thompson stepped into the hotel bar-room and ordered a "brandy smash," to quiet his nerves. Unused to liquor, the stimulant had fired his brain, and rendered him reckless.

Half-past eight o'clock came, and found Thompson in the telegraph office poring over his machine. That sentence flashed across his brain or stood out in bold relief against the wall. The silence of the little office rolled in in thundering tones through his head. Oh! for any thing to divert his attention from that sentence.

Click-a-tick! Click-a-tick! The wires are talking! He translates the cabalistic sound—"Is the road yet repaired?"

He seizes the instrument. A few short moments and a fatal message is delivered. At the other end of the line is read by the operator: "All right. The coast is clear."

One thousand happy souls freighted the long lightning express as it thundered forth from the station. Even the engineer felt safe and cheerful as he crowded on steam for fifty miles an hour. They passed Bloomfield. No stoppage was made, but, as they whirled swiftly by, a man sprung from the office, bareheaded, and in shirt sleeves, frantically gesturing at the passing train.

Five minutes later, a fearful jarring noise was felt by the passengers, and the mighty iron horse, with its car-loads of human freight, was hurled from the brow of a precipice into the dark and rushing torrent below. Screams of mortal agony rent the air, while devastation and death met the eyes of those who sustained but slight injuries. Help was procured, and all within the power of mortal man was done to alleviate the agonies of the sufferers. Let us return to the telegraph operator.

Scarcely had the message been transmitted over the wires, ere the appalling realization of the fearful mistake rushed with overwhelming force upon his mind. Hastily he countermanded the former telegram, but it was too late. The thunder of the locomotive could already be heard as it sped on to destruction.

Springing out upon the platform, he yelled and shrieked out the awful warning, but it was of no avail. The rumble of the cars drowned the strongest efforts of his voice, and he was passed unheard. His muscles, strung to their tightest tension, suddenly gave way, and he sunk, swooning, to the platform.

Among the dead were found Tom Thornby and Richard Thompson's wife, thus proving that his suspicions were correct. They eloped, but met an awful doom.

Three months afterward, Richard Thompson stood before the court on trial for his life. The singular facts of the case were thus related, and defendant's counsel plead for pardon on the ground of a terrible mistake. The stern rigor of the law allows for no mistakes, and, despite an able lawyer, Richard Thompson obtained but a slight commutation from capital punishment, that is, imprisonment for life.

suspicion crept over my mind that probably the man had committed some act which would place him in peril of the law, else why should he dread the presence of the officers of justice.

Then a sudden faintness seized upon the man. His head dropped upon his breast, the glaring eyes became glassy and fixed, a low groan came from his lips. Quickly I knelt by his side.

"My friend, you are in pain?" I cried. With a great effort he rallied from the faintness that had come over him. He fixed his bloodshot eyes upon me. I noticed that they were swollen and looked as if they would start from their sockets.

"Friend!" he muttered, in wonder; "you, a gent, call me your friend?"

"Yes, you are sick; we are all brothers in this world, be our stations high or low; in health we sometimes forget that fact, but sickness should make us recognize it. If I can do any thing to help you I will do so gladly," I said.

"Do you know who I am?" he murmured. It was clear that in his pathway through the world he had met with but little friendship.

"No," I replied, "I do not; how should I?"

"I'm Jimmy, the Tramp—a vagabond," he said, slowly.

"It doesn't matter to me who you are," I said. "You are a fellow being and in pain. That gives you a claim on me that I can not disregard. I will gladly help you if I can."

"Well, you're a gent, you are," he said, feebly. "I believe I'm done for. I ain't had nothing to eat for three days, but I ain't that that's killing me."

"What is the matter then?"

"I'm afraid!" And as he spoke he glanced around as if he expected to see some shadowy form appear on the moonlit dock.

"Afraid of what?" I asked, in wonder.

"Of the old man," he whispered.

"What old man?"

"The one I went for," he muttered, and again he looked around him in fear.

"You have committed some deed of violence then?"

"Yes, but I didn't go to do it," he almost whined. "I was crazy for a minute; I struck him afore I thought, and then, when I saw the blood on his head when he went down on his knees afore me, it kinder made me crazy. But, I've paid for it, though, and his voice grew more and more husky; 'I haven't slept a wink since that night. I can't eat any thing; I seem to choke when I try. He's round me all the time. I kin see his head abo' my head—ah!" and the poor wretch shuddered and closed his eyes as if to shut out the sight that he had described.

Then, in a moment, with a deep groan, he opened them again. "It's no use shutting my eyes; I kin see him just as well with 'em shut as I kin open. Every man that comes near me I think is a perlice detective a-going to drag me off to jail. It's killing me."

"You are wrong about not sleeping," I said; "you were asleep when I came up."

"I don't call that sleep," he said, with a moan. "I was fighting the whole thing over again. What's the use of sleep if I get no rest?"

"Why not go and deliver yourself up to justice?" I asked. "Surely the worst punishment that the law can inflict can not be as bad as that you are suffering now."

"That's so," he murmured; "but I hain't got the courage. I'm afraid. When I think over what I've done, I don't understand how I ever came to do it. I must have been crazy. I never harmed a mouse afore in my life. Sir, you are 'bout the only one in the world that has ever spoken kindly to me. I am dying—I know it. I shan't live another hour. I'll tell you all about it."

I felt that I was to hear some terrible story. I saw that the outcast had come near the truth when he had said that he could not live another hour, for even now by the light of the moonbeams I could see that the damp dew of death was gathering fast upon his face.

"They call me Jimmy, and I'm a tramp," he began, "that is, a feller without home, friends or any thing else. I was born in a workhouse down in a little town in the State of Maine. My mother was a pauper and died when I was a baby; who my father was I never knew. I staid in the workhouse till I was about twelve years old, then I was bound out to a farmer. I was by nature a little weak in the head, and the treatment of my master didn't make me any better. He beat and abused me all the time. I staid with him until I was about twenty years old. Then one day he beat me worse than usual, so at night, when everybody was asleep, I set fire to the house and ran away."

"From that time to this I have been a tramp. I've begged here and stolen there—only little things, though, 'cos I never had courage to risk much."

"I worked a little in Boston in a shipyard, but I wasn't fit for much and they turned me off. The boss, too, didn't pay me what he said he would, so in revenge I stole some of the tools."

"Then I walked to New York. I stole and begged my way and sold all the tools I kept one, a bit of iron turned up at the ends, clamp-like. I thought it would be useful, 'cos I was getting desperate and it would be a good thing to use to get into some house that was shut up and the owners gone to the country."

"Well, I wandered 'round New York for a couple of days and I couldn't get a chance to make any thing. So one afternoon, up-town, I saw workmen going into a big brown-stone front house. I thought that if I could slip in I might hide somewhere and get a chance at night to pick up something valuable."

"I watched my chance, got in, and hid in a closet, and at night when all were asleep, I came out. I opened a door and found the gas was burning in the room. There was a safe in the room and it was open. Just as I knelt down to examine it I heard a step. I jumped up and saw an old man standing in the room. He had heard me come in, I suppose. He attempted to run, but I was too quick for him and hit him on the back of the head with the iron; the blow staggered him round and he fell on his knees; then I was crazy and I struck him half a dozen times. But when he lay dead afore me I was afraid. I took what valuables I could get and got out of the house. It wasn't daylight, and no one saw me."

"But that old man has been with me ever since. I couldn't rest. Every one I met seemed to know what I had done. I threw all the things I took into the river. I feel that I am dying—frightened to death. Ah! there he is now!"

And with a sudden effort the outcast sprung to his feet, waved his arms wildly, then lost his balance, and fell overboard before I could stretch out a hand to save him. The tide, sweeping outward with tremendous force, bore him from my sight. He never rose to the surface.

The rushing waters buried the guilty man and his secret forever from the world.

The question presents itself to my mind: did I hear the true solution to the mystery that has thrilled with horror the whole country, or was the story but the ravings of a lunatic?

The Skeleton's Will.

BY T. C. HARBAUGH.

"I do not doubt your platonic love for my daughter, Courtney Hilliard; but I have told you upon what conditions she is yours." Colonel Ashley's lips closed like a vice upon his last word, and the dark eyes of his single auditor sought the ground.

A silence of several minutes filled the beautiful arbor in which the couple stood, and the colonel, closely regarding the young man, spoke again:

"Did you hear me?"

"Yes, sir," said the youth, raising his eyes. "Colonel Ashley, you are cruel. You know my condition in life—that in point of wealth I am far below you; but, as a man, thank God, I am your equal. You say that you will not give me your child, Leontine, until I can command forty thousand dollars. I possess but one-fortieth of the great sum now, and I have nothing but my knowledge of medical lore with which to earn the balance. I am heir to thrice the sum you have named; but where is my uncle? I have told you the strange story of his life—how, when disappointed in the affections of the heart, he left his home, and it is supposed, came to this State. Whether he lives, or is dead, I do not know. I shall strive to hunt him up. How long will you wait?"

"Two years—Leontine will be twenty then."

"The allotted time is short, Colonel Ashley, extremely short for the accomplishing of my work—the laying of forty thousand dollars or its equivalent at your feet."

"The period is sufficiently long," said the Virginian millionaire. "If you fail, Leontine must have some other for a husband, and I do not want her charmless. I have almost sworn, Courtney, that she must win a rich husband; and I must keep my word."

"And I will honor you for preserving your integrity, colonel," said the young physician. "I shall work hard for the sum, the coming two years."

"I hope you will prove successful," said Ashley, feelingly; "for I can not but think well of you."

"Thank you," Courtney bowed.

"You say you have a thousand dollars?"

"Yes; perhaps twelve hundred."

"Why not go to New York and speculate. A judicious investment of your means might place the coveted sum in your possession in a year."

"Yes, and teach me to cheat my fellow-men," said Hilliard, with a cynical smile.

"No; I will not speculate, and run ten thousand chances of losing my little all. I shall track my uncle, and if I fail to find him, why, then, I suppose, I must give up my cherished hopes. My *chateau en Espagne* are vanishing already."

"Do not despair, my young Esculapian," said the colonel, smiling. "Fortune may crown your repeated efforts. I know a young gambler who broke the bank by staking his slaves."

"Colonel, I promised to accompany Leontine to Wickersham to-morrow. Does she still intend going?"

"Yes. Why do you ask?"

"I thought you had changed your mind since I asked for her hand."

"You thought, then, that I feared an elopement?"

"I did not know."

"I fear nothing of the kind, sir," interrupted Ashley. "I know you, Courtney Hilliard; at least I think I do. I am not afraid to intrust my child to your care. The ride through the mountains will be a lonely one, unless it is enlivened by conversation."

A moment later the arbor was deserted, and Courtney Hilliard parted with Colonel Ashley at the garden gate.

"Forty thousand dollars," murmured the young man, as he walked toward the stables, in one of which his horse was stalled. "I do wonder if I can command it within the allotted time. I shall try. But is the reward not worth the toil? Ay, ten thousand times. She is a priceless jewel, and yet forty thousand dollars will purchase her."

He led his horse from the stables and galloped off toward Leesville and his little office.

Upon his humble couch, at the foot of which stood an anatomical skeleton, the doctor sunk to sleep, wearying his brain with the perplexing forty thousand dollars. By and by he wandered into dreamland, and this is what he saw there:

He thought that he entered an old house rapidly falling into decay. The air of desolation and loneliness pervaded the apartments, in one of which, and upon a bed, he fell asleep. Presently he awoke to behold a skeleton standing at his side. A skeleton we said; but two fiery eyes burned in the bony sockets. He tried to spring from the couch and fly from the hideous apparition; but, one of the fleshless hands held him down, and the other held aloft a legal-looking document, upon which was written, as though with fiery pen, these words: "The will of Cecil Hilliard."

Then the specter vanished, and Courtney sprung from his couch—to find himself on the floor of his little office.

He looked around. The bright moonlight streamed into the room at the transom, and fell upon his skeleton. Courtney thought he detected a smile on the fleshless face. Presently he sought his couch again, but slept no more that night. He thought about the specter's will. Was his uncle Cecil dead? and did he hold his will in his skeleton hands?

These mental questions puzzled the young physician till the dawn of day.

The sun had marked a point not far above the eastern horizon, when Courtney Hilliard and Leontine Ashley left the plantation for Wickersham, the residence of the young girl's uncle.

It was distant fifty miles from the colonel's mansion, and, owing to the roughness of a portion of the country, the journey had to be made in the saddle. The road led through the Blue Ridge, where the scenery was exceedingly picturesque.

The horses were impatient to be off, for they had not been ridden for several days, and the lovers left Ashmoor, as the plantation was called, at a brisk gallop.

The mountains were crossed without incident, and our travelers descended into an open country.

We shall reach the village of Rosadalis to-night," remarked Courtney, as they emerged from the last gloomy defile of the Blue Ridge. "There we will carry with my medical friend, Doctor Rosson, till morning."

Leontine did not reply; but suddenly reined Cricket in.

"What did you hear, Leontine?" Courtney inquired.

"Thunder, I thought," she answered.

Courtney laughed as he surveyed the heavens.

conspirator standing in the court we have just crossed."

"Let us inspect the abode of the ghosts," cried Leontine. "We must remain here till dawn, and I could not be idle."

"Nor I, Leontine. I am as eager to inspect a haunted house as yourself. We must first procure a light. I have matches. Let us grope our way to a room in which we may be so fortunate as to find a candle."

By examination, Courtney discovered that he had but two matches, and they felt along the corridor wall till a door was found. Entering the gloomy room, Courtney lit one of the matches, and before it became extinguished, they discovered a wax candle lying on a stand.

The young physician uttered a shout of joy as he seized it, and soon its long extinguished light burned anew.

The room contained nothing worth inspecting, and they left it to seek another.

"No ghosts yet," said Leontine, smiling, as they emerged from what had been somebody's library. The books on the decaying shelves were covered with mold, and the atmosphere of the apartment was damp and injurious to its inhaler. "I do wish we would encounter a real ghost," she continued. "We could have something to talk about when we get to uncle's."

Courtney replied in a gay strain, and they paused before double doors, on the second floor of the haunted house.

Noislessly one of the doors turned on its hinges, and closed of its own accord.

"Spring doors," remarked Courtney. "The inhabitant of this house was ahead of the times."

The room proved to be larger than any they had examined, and contained a large curtained bed. An old-fashioned bureau stood in one corner of the chamber, and Courtney stepped up to it.

Leontine did not follow him, but walked across the room to inspect the couch.

The young man was attempting to draw forth one of the drawers when Leontine shrieked, and ran trembling and pale to his side.

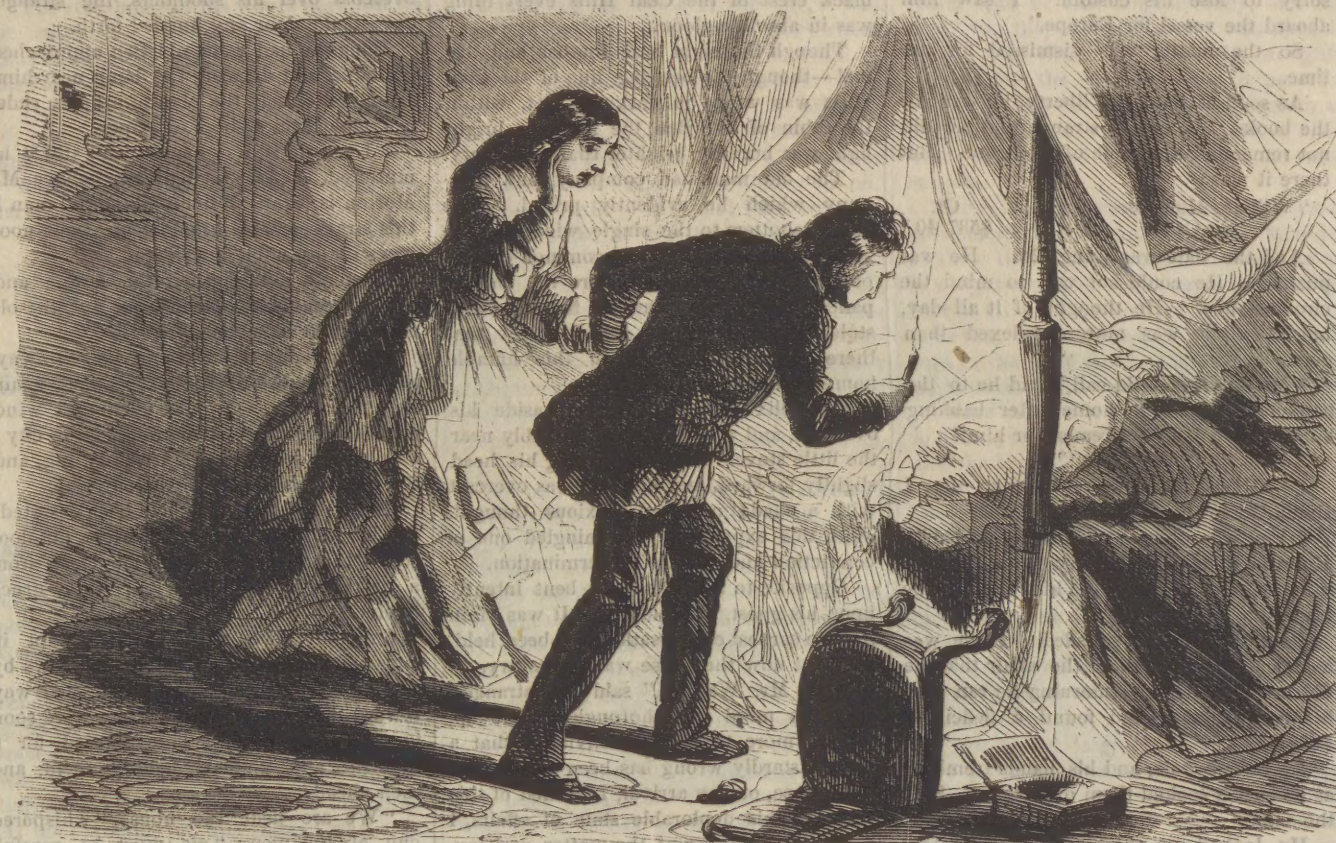
"What is it, Leontine?" he cried, turning and confronting the pale girl.

"I do not know, Courtney. The bed is occupied!"

"Occupied?" he cried.

"Yes," gasped Leontine. "I touched something on the pillow, and oh! it was cold as ice."

"We must solve the mystery," he said,



THE SKELETON'S WILL.

"Thunder! Why, my dear Leontine, your senses must have deceived you. Look up at the sky and point out to me a single cloud."

"That were impossible, Courtney," the young girl answered. "But, did you not notice clouds before we entered the mountains?"

"I certainly did, Leontine."

A moment's silence succeeded, to be followed by a peal of thunder.

"There!" cried Leontine. "I knew I was not deceived. Let us ride fast, Courtney, for the storm is coming over those old eternal hills upon us."

"We must ride fast if we would escape a drenching," said Courtney. "Come, Leontine."

The colonel's daughter touched Cricket's flanks with her tiny golden spurs, and away they dashed before the storm.

But the elements traveled faster than they, and at last Courtney drew rein before a large, antique and dilapidated-looking house which stood a short distance from the roadside.

"The storm is upon us," he said, addressing his companion; "and we must seek shelter in the haunted house. Are you afraid of ghosts, Leontine?"

"No," answered Leontine, laughing. "I have longed to be permitted to pass a night in that old building, and I hope I am to be gratified at last."

"Undoubtedly you are, Leontine," said Courtney. "We'll ride into the yard, and I will stable the animals. The stable seems to be in good repair, and will, I think, protect them."

They rode boldly in at the gateless avenue and up to the long stables.

Leontine stood on the worm-eaten threshold while Courtney secured the horses as best he could in the gloom, and together they entered the chilly front corridor.

"It is a shame," remarked Leontine, "that this building is permitted to go to ruin—and for those broad acres to become unutilized lands. Superstition is the people's greatest foe, and they do not try to overcome it. I wonder if it is true that the owner of this estate was an accomplice of Aaron Burr. People say that, after the discovery of Burr's conspiracy, the owner and dweller of this property manumitted his slaves, and never afterward emerged from the building."

"Yes, Leontine, they tell strange stories about him and the ghosts that are said to haunt it. A gentleman affirmed once that three years after Burr's death he beheld the

in a firm voice. "Give me your hand, Leontine."

He took her trembling hand, and, picking up the candle, led the way to the bed.

The next minute they paused beside it, and thrusting the candle forward, Courtney beheld a ghastly sight.

A skeleton was stretched upon the couch—the skeleton of a man, as Courtney's knowledge of anatomy at once informed him!

Leontine shrieked and drew back. The doctor released her hand and stepped nearer the bed. The skeleton lay upon its back, but the face was turned directly toward him. One of its hands rested upon the breastbone, while the other lay at the side opposite limb.

Suddenly Courtney detected a white object in the hand last mentioned. A moment later, and he held an old legal document of some kind, tied with faded blue tape.

The ink upon the back of the document had faded somewhat; but, after a close examination, he almost shrieked:

"The last will and testament of Cecil Hilliard!"

Leontine was at his side in an instant.

"What did you say, Courtney?" she asked, laying her hand on his arm.

"That is my lost uncle's skeleton," he cried, pointing at the hideous object on the bed; "and this document is his will!"

"Well, let us see what he says," said Leontine, scarce crediting the evidence of her senses.

Courtney sprung to the bureau, and Leontine held the candle while he tore the will open and read aloud its contents.

It was, indeed, his uncle's will, bequeathing to him the large estate upon which they then were, and large sums of money concealed about the house. At the conclusion of the will was a short account of his uncle's life, which would not interest the general reader.

Cecil Hilliard was really an accomplice of Aaron Burr, and, fearing arrest, he had manumitted his many slaves, and committed suicide by taking poison.

Then Courtney recollected his dream, and could not but be astonished at the singular fulfillment related above, for he had found his uncle's will in a skeleton's hand!

They spent the remainder of the night reading and re-reading the will, which bespoke for them a life of happiness. They did not hear the noise of the elements without, but thought only of the future as a happy one. The following morning they

reached Wickersham, when they related to astonished friends their strange adventures.

The bones of Cecil Hilliard, the suicide, were decently interred, and the young physician took possession of his new estate.

The money found in the house amounted to sixty thousand dollars, and Courtney set about, at once, to improve and beautify the property.

Willingly Colonel Ashley bestowed his daughter's hand upon her lover, who found her, indeed, a jewel.

The haunted house has long since disappeared, and where it once stood now stands one of the most imposing mansions to be found in the Old Dominion, at the present day.

It is the residence of Courtney Hilliard, Esq.

The Banker's Ward:

OR,

The Shadowy Terror of Arrancourt.

BY GEO. S. KAIME.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MERCIFUL BRUTE.

ELLA MARTIN felt the bloodthirsty paws upon her breast, but she had no power to thrust him back. With a low wail of anguish and despair, she sunk senseless upon the rock.

The hound, instead of falling upon her, and tearing her in pieces, licked her hands, whining with delight.

After some moments Ella woke from her swoon, and found Prince sitting by her head, and gazing into her face. Hardly comprehending her situation, she spoke to him:

"Good dog! good Prince!"

He crouched joyfully by her side, and allowed her to stroke his head. Ah, Dora Martin, you have made another mistake.

Ella rose to her feet overjoyed at her escape. No more thoughts of the dark, cold water.

"Good Prince, you will not hurt me, will you?" she said, patting his head. "Good dog."

Prince took a few steps toward the mansion; then stopped and waited for her.

"No—no; not that way, Prince," said she, sadly. "Come with me."

She started on; and, after some hesitation, Prince followed.

About daylight she suddenly came upon a little cabin, and before she could turn back, a familiar voice called to her.

"De good Lord save us, Missy Ella! where did ye come from?"

"Hush! Aunty Hersey!" exclaimed Ella, running gladly up to the black woman. "No one must know that I am here."

"Wal, I neber!" exclaimed the old negress, holding up her hands in astonishment, and opening her eyes until they looked really startling. "What is de trouble up to de hall?"

"Come in and I will tell you, aunty," said Ella, stepping toward the door.

The good woman led the way into the cabin, the dog following close upon Ella's footsteps.

"Now, aunty, if you will get me something to eat."

"Lord bless your sweet face! I ain't got nuffin fit to eat, but you shall have what dere is."

"Some of that nice corn cake, aunty."

"Yes, missy. And while I'm gittin' it, you tell me what's de matter ober dere."

Ella told her enough to satisfy her curiosity, interrupted often by her exclamations of wonder.

"Wal, I neber did hear de like! What is ye gwine to do?"

"I'm going to my uncle's in New York, aunty."

"Oh, Lord! so fur? Why ye neber will git back."

Ella smiled.

"I do not fear, aunty. If I can manage to get to the station, I can go all right. Where is Tom?"

"He's after de cow, missy."

"He will show me the way to the village?"

"He'll be glad to, missy. Now set right up and eat."

Ella's appetite was keen after her night-walk, and she ate the coarse, yet wholesome food, with a relish very pleasing to Aunty Hersey.

During the meal Tom came in. He was a bright-looking negro of twenty-one or two, and his mother told him enough of Ella's situation to give him a good understanding of it. It was well that she did so, for a few moments afterward, Henry Vinton galloped up to the door, and inquired for Ella.

"I doesn't see'd her," said Tom, who had stepped outside the door; and Henry rode away again, little dreaming that he had been so near the object of his search.

Ella watched him until he was no longer in sight; then she sunk upon the floor, sobbing bitterly. Aunty Hersey strove to comfort her, but finding it useless, left her to herself.

"She'll feel better for it," she said, to Tom.

And Ella did feel better, and became almost cheerful.

Henry's appearance showed her the impossibility of attempting to reach the station by daylight, so she remained hid away in the cabin until the darkness came on.

Tom procured a horse from the neighboring plantation, and as soon as it was dark, Ella took her seat in the saddle, and Tom led the horse all the way, the dog following behind.

The station was reached in safety, and she learned that a train going North would arrive at midnight. She waited in the depot, Prince never leaving her for a moment, and when the train rumbled up to the station she hurried aboard, taking Prince with her.

So the worst part of her journey was over. While she was speeding in safety to New York, Dora was glooming over her probable death, and already making her preparations for the grand event that would make her mistress of Arrancourt.

Henry was yet searching for Ella, and Moses Martin, ignorant of Dora's treachery, was lavishing his love upon the child that was spared to him, and mourning for the lost one.

CHAPTER XIII.

bank, he was well known, and succeeded the better for it.

Charles Matthews was charmed with him. In all his dealings with men he never yet found one who seemed to embody so much that was noble and manly as this orphan. At the end of the first month he declared that Paul was more than filling Goldthwaite's place.

"Paul, I shall increase your salary from this time," said the banker, as they walked home.

"You do me great honor," said Paul, yet showing the pleasure he felt.

"Not more than you deserve. I will tell you frankly that I expected much of you, but you have gone beyond my expectations."

"I am glad that I give you satisfaction," said Paul, "for I took the place with many misgivings."

"I never doubted your ability for a moment," said the banker, enthusiastically, "and I am so much pleased with you that I venture to hope that, before many years, I can leave my business in your hands."

Paul pressed the banker's hand warmly, and his voice was husky as he replied:

"Mr. Matthews, I once almost cursed the fate which made me what I am. I had lost all faith in man, and I am ashamed to say, almost, doubted the existence of a God. Parents or friends I had none, and I believed that every one was against me—that in all the wide world there was not one helping hand. Bless God, I now see my error. You have saved me from infidelity. I know there is a just God over all; and I know, though he has chastened me, that he put it into your heart to save me from myself. With his help, I hope to always deserve the confidence you now have in me."

The banker was touched by this exhibition of genuine gratitude, and he replied: "Paul, whatever may happen, you must know that you have a friend in me. Nothing can shake my confidence, and I hope that while we each live we shall not be separated."

Paul's life at the house was not so pleasant. The influence of Meta's presence grew stronger and stronger all the while, yet opened wider and wider the gulf between them. Since that day when he held Meta's form close to his heart, and beat his way through the surf, he had known that his happiness depended upon her; and this very knowledge was the source of keenest misery.

Although he had given no sign, yet she avoided him. Her manner was cold and distant. His step in the hall would check her mirth, and bring to her face a look of chilling reserve, begetting the same in his. So these two, loving each other, met every day, but drew no nearer; and none guessed the passions that surged beneath the calm surface of their lives.

"Oh, this misery!" wailed Meta, as she walked beneath the trees, far away from the house, that she might be alone. "This soul-torture! Must I be driven into the streets by this love—my love? Oh, James Martin! what dread revenge you chose! Will it always follow me? Must I ever be tortured with that hissing—hissing whisper? Was it not enough to turn me into the streets, nameless, homeless, friendless? Oh, Paul, Paul! if you only knew! No, no! you must not! I could not outlive your scorn. Coldness, indifference, even hate I might bear, but never the contempt—the nothing. No, no, you never shall hear it! I'll love on and enjoy my misery; yes, enjoy it; loving you and seeing you, I can bear it all; your coldness, George Matthews' hateful persistency, and my foster-parent's love—bear it all if I am near you."

The summer breeze fanned her cheek, and whirled the old last-year leaves about her face; the fleeting insects buzzed close to her ear; and the happy birds sang their thrilling carols; but she heard none of the sneaking listener to Meta's secret.

And Meta walked away, knowing not that George Matthews had heard her outspoken thoughts.

"Loves him, does she?" he hissed through his closed teeth; and his face wore a sickly pallor as though struck with the plague. "Loves Paul Rodney! And that secret? I care not, only that I might use it against her. Well, well, this has been a good hour's work; and my way is clear to me now. This immaculate Paul must lose his darling reputation. Ha! ha! won't it make my uncle's faith in humanity a little weak? I guess not, eh? George Matthews, here's a chance to show your skill in diplomacy. All I ask is the opportunity. I'll make one if there is no other way."

But the opportunity came to him. One day, when he was alone in the bank, a gentleman from a neighboring town came in to settle his account.

"I shall sail for Europe to-morrow," said he, "and as I do not know how long I shall be away, I am settling up all accounts. I saw Mr. Matthews in the city, and he referred me to you, Mr. Rodney. William Montrose."

George noticed the mistake, but did not correct it. He turned to the account, and Mr. Montrose paid it.

"I will take a receipt, if you please, Mr. Rodney."

Again the mistake; and it matured the plan for revenge which it at first suggested—revenge upon Paul Rodney for being loved by Meta. It was very simple and easily executed, for he was expert with the

pen, and could easily imitate Paul's bold chirography.

He wrote out a receipt, and signed Paul's name, which Mr. Montrose took, and left the bank.

Then he gave the gentleman credit on the books, and even Paul would have been loth to say it was not his own handwriting.

The money he, of course, put in his pocket, and that was all there was to do. Time would do the rest.

Paul came in soon after, but George was very busy with the books.

"I grew tired of idleness," said George, "and I thought I would give you a lift. I often helped Goldthwaite."

"Thank you, George. I am not feeling very well, and was wondering how I should get through with my work. If it is not too much trouble—"

"None whatever, Paul. I would rather do it than not. So go and lie down a while."

Paul thanked him again and turned away.

CHAPTER XXV.

DISMISSED.

"PAUL, did Mr. Montrose call to settle his account?" asked Charles Matthews.

It was nearly two weeks after the occurrence.

"I do not recognize the name," said Paul, looking up from his writing.

George did not lift his eyes, but his hand grew so unsteady that he put his pen in the rack and walked to the window.

"Why, yes, Paul," said the banker. "I saw him in the city before he came, and afterward. He had your receipt for I saw it, and no one can mistake your signature."

"Then he must have been here," said Paul, thoughtfully, "yet I do not remember the name. I will look it up presently."

"No matter about that, Paul. I merely mentioned it because it happened to come to mind. One of our best men. I am sorry to lose his custom. I saw him aboard the vessel for Europe."

So the matter was dismissed for the time.

As soon as Paul had liberty, he went to the books. It was so strange that he did not remember the name of Montrose. But there it was:

"William Montrose, Cr. \$537.40."

And the date was June 12th. He was puzzled. He could not call to mind the circumstance. He thought of it all day, but at night was more perplexed than ever.

"Mr. Montrose did call," said he to the banker, as they rode home after banking hours; "but I do not remember him."

"June 12th, was it not?"

"Yes, sir. It seems so strange that I should forget his face so soon."

"You were busy at the time, probably. He was in a great hurry too. Fifteen minutes would have made him late for the train."

Paul was not yet satisfied. There was a look of mystery about the affair that he did not like. In the morning he ran over his cash balance and found a deficit of \$537.40.

He turned pale, and his hands trembled as he hastily looked them over again. Still the same.

He looked up, and George Matthews was at his elbow.

"Short, eh?"

"No," said Paul, sharply, for he yet believed that he had overlooked something.

George smiled and turned away. He felt so secure that he could afford to smile.

"I guess Paul's cash accounts are getting mixed," he said, carelessly, to his uncle, as he took up the morning paper.

"Why?" asked the banker.

"I was just out there, and he seemed terribly agitated about something. I spoke to him, and the way he snapped me up was a caution."

"Well, if he is in trouble, he will let me know," said the banker, confidently.

The words of George, so carelessly spoken, had their desired effect. The banker did not quite forget them, and hardly knowing why, he watched Paul more closely.

He noticed that his manner was not quite so easy. He had lost part of his frankness. He seemed to avoid companionship, and grew pale and careworn.

"Paul, you are working too hard," said the banker. "You must take some rest."

"Oh, no," said Paul, quickly. "I do not need it."

"But you are getting pale and thin," persisted the banker. "I will keep your work up a few days if you will take a little recreation."

"No, no, Mr. Matthews. You are very kind, but I prefer to remain. Some other time, perhaps."

George smiled; and the banker saw it, just as he hoped he would.

"George, what do you suspect?" blurted the banker after Paul had left the room.

"Well, really, uncle, I do not know that I suspect any thing; but I was amazed to see how frightened Paul looked when you spoke of giving him a vacation."

"But there was more meaning in that smile than mere amazement," said Mr. Matthews, curiously. "Now what is it?"

"Uncle, I dislike to say any thing against Paul Rodney; but he has acted strangely of late."

"Enough, sir," said the banker, with some asperity. "I understand you now."

The following morning the banker called Paul aside.

"Paul, you are in some trouble. Tell me all, and I will help you out."

If Paul had unburdened his mind then, all would have been made clear; but he could not. He yet had hopes of finding some error in his calculations. And if that failed him, he had hoped to replace the loss from his own savings.

"Do not ask me now, Mr. Matthews. I shall be all right again soon."

But the seed of suspicion had been sown, and George Matthews took good care it should germinate. By a careless word now and then, a look, or a smile, he kept his uncle in a state of perpetual uneasiness.

At last he resolved to see for himself whether George had any real cause for his whisperings.

He went to the bank after dark, and remained half the night. When he came out, his face was white and stern.

In the morning he was closeted with Paul Rodney for a long time. "What passed between them no one knew, but Paul did not go to the bank, neither did he wait for breakfast; and the next train to the city took Paul Rodney."

(To be continued.—Commenced in No. 32.)

The Masked Miner:

OR, THE IRON-MERCHANT'S DAUGHTER.

A TALE OF PITTSBURGH.

BY WM. MASON TURNER.

AUTHOR OF "UNDER SAIL," "SILKEN CORD," ETC.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A LEGAL DOCUMENT DRAWN AT MIDNIGHT.

It was a dark night, just one week after the occurrences detailed in the previous chapter. But few lights were as yet lit in the streets of Pittsburgh, and over on the black crest of the Coal Hills every thing was in absolute gloom.

Though the night was somber and dismal—though the beetling line of the Coal Hills was wrapt in darkness, yet, within the cabin of old Ben, the miner, a bright light was burning, brighter than customary.

The old man had company, and company which he evidently prized. The coarse shutters to the single window were closed and bolted, and the common curtain of calico was dropped before the narrow panes. Not a ray from the flaming lamp stole forth to let those outside know that there were wakeful eyes in this humble home of the miner.

Mr. Felix Morton had laid aside his overcoat, and was seated comfortably near the little stove. He was leaning his head slightly forward, and his face was overcast with a shade of deep, anxious thought.

With this expression was mingled one of conviction and a settled determination.

Opposite to him, his eyes bent intently upon his guest, was old Ben. It was plain that an earnest conversation had been held, and that now the pause was temporary.

"No, Mr. Walford," said the stranger, as if his mind was thoroughly made up, "I am more than ever convinced that a most dastardly wrong has been committed. Ever since, on my arrival, I learned of this singular, this deplorable state of affairs, I have been thinking of the matter, and laying my plans. Fairleigh Somerville is a scoundrel of the deepest dye."

"I agree with you there, Mr. Morton; but it seems very strange to me—though I am an unlearned man—that old Mr. Harley should be so dumb, sir—so unbusiness-like, as to let the fellow take advantage of him. You know, sir, that the old man did make a big fortune, and he must have had judgment and brains to do it."

"That may all be, but I have learned enough to know that Mr. Harley spent money recklessly—that he went security for irresponsible parties—that he lost thousands upon thousands of dollars upon ventures that were mere phantoms. Now, it is not a hard matter to imagine the old man as anxious to retrieve his fortune—to make his money back, you know."

There was a pause. Old Ben seemed struck with the words of the other.

"You are right, sir, right as you always are. I see through it now," he said, approvingly.

Then ensued a long conversation, which lasted several moments. At length old Ben said, aloud:

"Exactly; but how about the house, and—"

"I was going on to say, that this fellow, being aware of the financial condition of Mr. Harley, offered to advance the necessary money for the investment—this investment, as I remarked, a fraudulent one. He allowed the matter to go on from time to time, and then, finally, pushed the old gentleman for a settlement. There being no funds, this man took a lien on the mansion as his security. Do you see?"

"Exactly, Mr. Morton; that is, to a certain extent. But, you know, I am no scholar; and how, if this was a speculation matter, the old merchant couldn't see through it—as no returns, dividends, or whatever you call them, failed to come in?"

Mr. Morton hesitated, but only for a moment.

"With a man like 'Somerville,' he said, "one who has such a smooth tongue and so plausible a manner—he can readily

credit him with inventing reasons for any thing. You know him of old. But the time will come!" and the stranger smiled grimly, though he continued at once.

"You may be satisfied, then, that in this matter, he blinded the old man. I am certain I am not far from being right. And I'll probe the matter to the bottom. Justice to more than one shall be done!" and the stranger's eyes flashed as he spoke.

Old Ben glanced at him, pondered for a moment, and then said, slowly:

"You are right, Mr. Morton. I see it all plain enough now; and as you say, sir, justice must be done! I haven't forgotten old days and certain deeds! We'll work together, sir!"

"I have reckoned on you all along," said Mr. Morton, quietly, "and the sooner we work, the better."

"I am ready, sir, and waiting," replied old Ben, promptly.

A conversation, carried on in a low breath, ensued, lasting until a late hour in the night. Then Mr. Morton arose.

"It shall be so," he said, decidedly. "The work is hazardous, but we will do it. If we are detected—especially should we be wrong in our surmises—I will not deny but that we run a great risk. But the stake is too great, and the probabilities too much in our favor, for us to withdraw from the venture now."

"You can count on me, sir, in any event in this or any other work." The old miner spoke very decidedly.

Another pause ensued, but the stranger soon broke the silence by saying:

"Be sure to call on Laurence to-morrow. I searched him out myself. You can approach him better than I can. I am satisfied that he is an honest man at heart, and has been the dupe of this scoundrel." See him and—why, you know, if money is needed, call on me. Be ready to-morrow night; I will reconnoiter the premises to-day. If such an evidence is in existence, it must be near his person. But, wherever it may be, we must have it. Good-night."

In another moment, having thrown his overcoat over his shoulders, the stranger opened the door and hurried forth.

When he had gone, old Ben approached the table, and drawing the lamp near him, examined closely the plan of a house recently sketched on a sheet of paper.

"I can do it, if I am old and stiff!" he muttered. "And I half-way believe Mr. Morton is right. What a wonderful man is this stranger who brought me such good news of my noble boy, Tom!"

Then he extinguished the lamp; and, as a low chuckle escaped his lips, the old man sought his couch.

Another day dawned and passed away, and the shades of night gloomed again over the earth. A cold north-east wind was blowing rudely over the sleeping city; a drizzling, searching rain was falling, and the night was dismal in the extreme.

Long since the streets had been deserted; for, in addition to the cheerless out-door scene, the hour was late. The clock from a neighboring iron-mill had just struck twelve.

Suddenly, two figures, well wrapt in long cloaks, emerged from the shadows by the Port Wayne depot, and took their way toward Stockton avenue. They were soon in this dark street. They paused for a moment and glanced behind them, and then ahead.

"We are near the house," whispered one of the men; "we must be careful. Did you see the man?"

"Yes, sir; he is all right—is an honest man, after all, and wants no money. He is anxious to be free from that villain; but for one week his hands are bound by an oath. He has a high opinion of an oath, sir."

"And I of him, on that account? He shall not lack for a friend, when he needs one. But come; we have work before us. Have your pistol ready. We must deal with villains, if other arguments fail, with powder and ball, and I solemnly swear that I will know the truth in this matter!"

"You are right, sir, and I am ready" was the quiet response.

Without another word, the two walkers strode swiftly, though cautiously, onward. A few moments elapsed, when they suddenly paused. They were standing in the shade of the imposing Harley mansion, now the residence of Fairleigh Somerville, the millionaire. The men again glanced cautiously around them. Then the taller of the two gently opened the inner gate and entered the front yard. His companion followed.

They hesitated not, but took their way noiselessly to the curved archway, leading, by an alley, to the rear of the dwelling.

The raw wind still moaned along the streets, and the cold rain pattered ceaselessly down.

The men, bent on such a mysterious errand, soon stood in the yard or court to the rear.

"He sleeps there!" whispered one of the men, at the same time pointing to a window of a room on the second story.

"An iron hook is below that window-sill; I know it well. Be guarded now, as you value life itself, and east the ladder!"

The other, silently and without replying, drew from beneath his cloak a coil of rope knotted with cross-pieces so as to form a ladder. He glanced up and measured the distance with his eye. Then, dropping the coil from his shoulders, he swung the

coil slowly around his head, several times, and then let fly.

But in an instant the rope rattled down again. Thanks, however, to the sighing wind and the pattering rain, the ladder gave forth no sound as it fell.

Again the man flung the coil—again it came down; and again and again.

Toss higher, and more to the right," whispered the other, who seemed to superintend matters.

The man obeyed. This time a half-cry of satisfaction escaped his lips, for the ladder had caught. The man tried it with his hand—then with his full weight. The ladder was firm.

"Let me go first," whispered the taller man, his voice beginning to be tremulous with excitement. As he spoke, he drew from his pocket a small revolving pistol, and placed it in his vest-pocket. Then he secured the long cloak around his waist with a stout cord. He waited no longer, but grasping the side-lines of the slender ladder, swung his feet from the ground, and began the ascent.

In a moment he had reached the window. He gently unhooked the shutters and swung them noiselessly back. Then he tried the window. A joyous cry almost burst from his lips as the sash moved up without a sound, under his touch.

Beckoning his companion to follow him, the tall man placed his hands on the window-sill and leaped lightly into the room. Scarcely breathing, and not stirring hand or muscle, he stood still until the other below had flung his cloak again over his shoulders, and securing it around him, mounted the ladder.

A moment, and he, too, was in the apartment, standing silent and motionless by the side of him who had entered first.

The room was in absolute darkness. The men listened intently. At first they could hear nothing; but, after a few moments, the long-drawn, heavy breathing of a sleeping man was borne to their ears.

One of the men took from beneath his coat a dark-lantern, and springing it on, paused. The straight flash of light gleamed out, and in an instant lit up the room. Among other things, it revealed the men who had come on this bold enterprise. But nothing could be seen of them save that their forms were enveloped in long cloaks, and their faces hidden beneath black masks.

The man who held the lantern slowly and cautiously turned the light around. At last its beams fell upon a bed. Lying on that bed was Fairleigh Somerville, locked deep in slumber. The tall man softly approached the sleeper's couch. His feet seemed shod with down—so noiselessly he walked. A moment, and he stood over him who slept so soundly. A wild, violent convulsion swept over his frame, and in a moment he had thrust his right hand into his bosom.

"Villain! your day comes! Its dawn is breaking!" said the masked man, in a hoarse whisper, as he turned off toward his companion. "He sleeps soundly," he continued; "we have nothing to fear; well to work!"

The men at once drew near the table. On this table were spread papers in wild confusion and disarray. While his companion held the lantern, the other—the taller man—leaned over and set to work to examine the papers hurriedly.

The sleeping man moved not, and naught was heard in the room save the faint rustle of the papers, the sighing of the wind, and the monotonous dropping of the rain.

Suddenly the man paused, in his search, and, reeling back, gasped for breath.

Then he slowly pointed to a page in a memorandum-book which he had spread open.

"Read, read, my friend! Read the truth! for we have now conquered, indeed!" His voice was hoarse and hissing, yet still guarded, as he spoke.

The other leaned down and glanced at the scribbled lines; but he shook his head.

"Read it for me," he replied, in a cautious whisper, his words short and excited. "You know I am only an uneducated man and no scholar."

His companion drew him down, and in a voice so low that it was scarcely audible, he read:

"This day closes my advances for old Harley! I wonder if he has found out the ruse of the oil well yet? No. He can never find it out! And I now hold his fine mansion legally, for a loan of sixty thousand dollars! Ha! ha! And, in a week, I'll claim the house or the money. Nice speculation! Ha! ha! ha! And the old fool, nor his white-faced daughter, dream not of my revenge—oh! how sweet!"

The men uttered not a word. The one who had read the entry in the memorandum-book shook violently. The other looked on, and his brawny hands clutched each other viciously. The tall man pondered for a moment, and then whispered:

"We have conquered, and justice shall now be done! Ay, this hour! Watch him! If he moves before I am done writing, throttle him! Spare him not!"

He instantly seated himself softly by the table and drew toward him pen and paper. Then he began to write rapidly.

The other at once moved cautiously to the bedside and kept his gaze bent on the man who slept so soundly.

A moment, or so elapsed, when he who was writing arose slowly to his feet. On the table lay a half-sheet which he had hastily written over. Without speaking to his companion further than to say:

"Be ready for any thing," he approached the bed at once. Laying his hand on the



shoulder of him who slept, he said, hoarsely:

"Awake, Fairleigh Somerville! Awake, I say! Justice calls you!"

The sleeper started and sprang upon his elbow. One glance at the two dark-clad masked figures, and he was about to cry out. But, instantly, a pistol-barrel was pressed to his temple, and a hoarse voice said in his ear:

"One cry, Fairleigh Somerville, and by the Lord that judges all things, I'll send a bullet through your brain! Be still and be wise! Now, man, retribution has overtaken you! Here!" and he dragged him fiercely from the bed to the table, "do you recognize that writing?" and he pointed, with shaking finger, to the entry in the memorandum-book.

Fairleigh Somerville almost sunk to the floor, and his teeth chattered with fright.

"Ay! I see you recognize it! Now, villain," continued the tall man, in a low, freezing tone: "Sign that paper which I have written. Here it is; sign it, and we will witness it!"

"What—what is it?" gasped the man.

"A deed of quit-claim and transfer which I have drawn to suit my purpose, of this mansion and the furniture it contains, to its rightful owner, old Richard Harley, whom you have so basely defrauded."

"Oh, God! I can not! I will not!"

"Then, by heaven, I'll shoot you through the head!" And the tall man clutched him by the throat, and pressed the pistol again to his head. His grasp tightened upon the writhing neck of the other, and his finger was upon the creaking trigger.

"Hold! hold!" stammered the poor wretch. "Release me; take away the pistol and I will sign."

"Good! Now mark me, Somerville: if you are to be found in this house day after to-morrow, you need not hope to escape a righteous vengeance which has been tracking you for years! Swear to me that you will vacate this house to-morrow. Swear at once—or you know the consequences!"

"Yes—yes! I—I—swear!"

"All's well, then. Now affix your name to that sheet of writing, and be quick about it!"

Somerville took the pen held out to him in his trembling grasp, and again glanced over the few clear, bold and unmistakable words which had been so hastily written. He hesitated and turned away; his face paled and wrinkled into a frown. But, he felt the eye of the unknown stranger burning into his very soul, through that hideous black mask, and with a desperate gesture and a fearful oath, the baffled man drove the pen rapidly along the line pointed out for his signature. He then shoved the paper toward the one who had thus conquered him.

The man glanced at the signature and muttered:

"All right; now my friend and myself will witness it!"

As he spoke, he drew the paper to the other side of the table, and taking a pen, quickly affixed his name. Motioning to his companion to do the same, he drew to one side.

Whatever might have been his friend's intentions, he was certainly wondrous slow in signing his name. Perhaps it was because his hands were so large and horny. But, at last, he laid the pen down with a satisfied air.

The tall man took the paper, and folding it up, placed it carefully in his bosom.

"This well, Fairleigh Somerville," he said; "and you may thank your good angel that you have escaped this lightly. Remember your oath and be wise. Now we will go. Of course you can speak of this if you choose."

"And who—who are you?" gasped Somerville, for he had not seen the signatures.

"Why, look at me, Fairleigh Somerville, and say if you can recall me and my memory now?"

As he spoke, he suddenly hurled his mask aside, and peered in the face of the other.

"My God! my God!" muttered Somerville, and fell to the floor.

Another moment, and the tall man, followed by his brawny companion, had disappeared through the window which was still open.

CHAPTER XXIX.

GATHERING THE HARVEST.

BUT Fairleigh Somerville quickly recovered from the shock. He sprang to his feet, struck a match and lit the gas. The brilliant light showed his face distorted by fear and passion; he was foaming at the mouth, and his eyes were bloodshot and staring. He paused not a moment, but hastily slipped on his clothes, and thrusting a revolver in his pocket, hurried from the room.

He took his way noiselessly down-stairs, and snatching an overcoat from the hat-rack, hastened to the front door, unlocked it softly and peered forth. He started back, and half reentered the house, as he saw dimly in the gloom, two tall, brawny figures, indistinct and grotesque, walking rapidly away.

"By heavens!" he muttered. "Fate tells me to follow! I'll obey! I am entrapped! I am ruined! And yet, two lucky shots may—"

The rest of his sentence was lost, as he hastily turned, closed the door softly, and left the house. In a moment he was in

the street, and then hanging close behind those who were ahead of him, he stole onward.

About an hour before day, that same night, the door of old Ben's cabin was suddenly opened, and the light streamed out. In the reflection, standing in the doorway, was the tall form of Felix Morton, the stranger, and just behind him was the brawny figure of old Ben.

A bright glow of triumph shone on the faces of the two men.

"Be sure to meet me in my rooms at the hour appointed, to-morrow evening," said Mr. Morton, loud and unguardedly. "The plan is arranged. I will write the letter in the morning, and I have no doubt of a favorable response. I long to tell the old man the good news in store for him. Poor Grace may yet be happy—"

"Worth indeed ever come back! But now, good-night," said Ben, "and God bless you, my—Mr. Morton!"

But the old man did not at once retire; he stood gazing vacantly in the darkness, after the form of the elegant stranger, who had already disappeared. Then with a low whistle and an ejaculation of satisfaction, the miner reentered his cabin and closed the door.

Scarcely had he gone, when slowly from the deep shadow of the house near the little window, a form slowly emerged. The form slowly straightened up.

It was that of a man. He paused for a moment and listened keenly. Then he trod quietly away, until he was out of ear-shot of the cabin. Then he quickened his pace.

"Furies and fiends!" he muttered, hoarsely, "am I dreaming! Are all the devils in torment leagued against me! Would to God I could overhaul him; but I am too late! Yet—yet—one more effort—one more desperate plunge for revenge, and then I'll be gone from these regions! And now for Laurence and Teddy. I'll use them for the last time, and then they—"

The remainder of his words were lost, as he strode on. As he entered upon the Smithfield street bridge, the light shone in his face.

The rays revealed the haggard features of one with whom the reader is acquainted.

But then the man passed on toward the dark, sleeping city.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 15.)

Cruiser Crusoe: OR, LIFE ON A TROPIC ISLE.

BY LAFAYETTE LAFOREST.

NUMBER TWENTY-FIVE.

It was an awful sight to gaze at the living fires and the boiling caldron, at the blackened perpendicular sides of the vast abyss, steaming and smoking at a million pores, gleaming all over like a bed of live coals.

In order to look more about me, I ascended a mound or sulphurous bank, at no great distance, which could be climbed and traveled over in its entire length, but still was hot, emitted mineral vapors, and at times shook with the vibration of the crater. At the extremity of this mound was a ravine, the bottom of which could not be seen though its edges were overhung by trees and shrubs, completely whitened and crystallized over by sulphur.

As at any moment a fresh movement of the fierce volcano might be dangerous, I hastened to leave the spot, and by skirting the huge crater, reach the other side of the island. But I was weary. Fortunately, the steam furnished a copious supply of water, which I found in pools, and after traveling some time, near one of these I encamped. A screen of canes and brakes hastily thrown up served to protect me from the scud caused by the steam.

The sight, when night came on, was magnificent, and I never wearied from rising to admire the salient jets and conical eruptions and beautiful fireworks of the volcano.

In the morning I continued on my way, taking the east side of the crater, and coming on new scenes of wonder at every moment. Soon I came to a wild region, broken by abrupt hills and deep gorges, and thickly set with shrubs and whortleberries, while thousands of birds seemed to consider it a safe and warm retreat.

The crater kept in sight nearly all the time, presenting new objects of interest at every step—but not to me. I was searching for that part of the island where Pabina and her friends had taken up their quarters, for sure I was that in that spot, she had located herself—there, being no other island within a reasonable distance.

But desolate, arid, sulphurous, and wanting in rich vegetation as it was, it might not have been so previous to the eruption.

But what had they done when that terrific outburst of nature took place? Had they retired to the further extremity of the island, and there crouched, trembling, during the earthquake, or had they launched their frail bark upon the waters, and sought safety in flight? This was the most probable elucidation of the mystery.

As I advanced, the desolation seemed to me to be greater than ever; now and then there was a patch of coarse earth, where whortleberries grew, which were eagerly devoured; and here and there a spring of

hot or lukewarm water, sometimes sulphurous, bubbled up and trickled away toward the sea, but nowhere did I behold in this place the faintest trace of any living thing.

And thus another weary day passed. At evening, faint and weary, I lay me down behind a huge boulder, and having had nothing but a piece of coconut, some whortleberries and a little water, tried to sleep off my sufferings, sorrows and regrets.

All night the heavy rumbling of the interior of the volcano could be heard, especially when I made the earth my pillow.

I rose on this day unrefreshed by sleep, and in no very pleasant mood. My journey, commenced under such very pleasant auspices, was a failure. I was as far off from the great object of my life as ever. All my dear and darling hopes were blasted, and I had changed a Paradise for a Pandemonium. How that I had fallen on pleasant places was forcibly brought to my notice and recollection by the aspect of this place, accursed and deserted of man.

Up soon after daybreak and away, after breakfasting on berries and water.

After ascending a somewhat steep elevation, the character of the country began to change. It was still vastly inferior to my own beautiful home, but it was a little more fertile. There were patches of trees here and there, some blades of grass, and now and then some fragrant and pretty shrubs; but still no animal that I could shoot.

Soon my steps brought me toward the top of some lofty cliffs that looked down upon the sea, or rather on a bay some miles across, along the shores of which vegetation appeared to have been luxuriant, though now trees were lifted up, their roots laid bare, and the whole economy of nature disturbed by the earthquake.

It must have been a pleasant spot, shielded entirely from the north, west and easterly winds, and no doubt was rich as a fishery, and had its fair stock of birds and other small game. But how to descend and explore the locality was a mystery, and yet I was determined to do it.

Examining the whole of the bay, it was clear that the cliffs were everywhere solid. My telescope was too accurate to allow of any deception on this point. Still there was an instinct, a kind of load-stone attraction, which told me that I must go down. There is at times a magnetic influence in our souls which draws us on, whether we will or no—and I felt irresistibly determined to try the experiment of searching the bay.

It did not look inviting—it did not look promising—it held out no hope of satisfaction—and yet I would go down. The uprooted trees, whole acres covered with a thick crust of cinders, rocks upheaved and every sign of the power of earthquake and eruption, determined me the more to be doing.

But how was the descent to be effected? The cliff was of goodly height, but, peering over, it did not appear to be so very difficult of descent, if one could but get to a ledge about thirty feet below. This did not appear difficult, when I recollected that my lasso was wrapped round my waist. To take it off was the work of a minute, and then I looked around.

Close above where the ledge was stood a point of rock projecting out of the soil, which not a dozen men could have moved. My lasso was, with a view to its being used for a variety of purposes, about fifty feet long. This I knotted all the way along at intervals of about a foot, and then using some strong sinnet I had about me, I fastened it to the rock.

I proceeded to the edge of the cliff to make sure that the rope did not chafe, as a fall would have been fatal. The cliff itself was about a hundred feet above the sea, with many deep fissures in its face, while around me was stubby jungle, underwood, overgrowing rocks, fissures and boulders in all directions.

As I prepared to descend, creeping over the cliff with my rope in my hand and my feet feeling for the rope, I thought of the singular story of Don Quixote descending into a well, but recollect well I had good reason to think more of it after. Next to "Robinson Crusoe," "Don Quixote" was my pet reading as a lad.

Though on board of ship I never hesitated to climb everywhere, and could show great activity and courage, my present undertaking cost me many a tremor. It was indeed quite a different undertaking: the cord not being fast below, and thus vibrating like a pendulum, made the task one of great difficulty; while the roar of the sea below, and the possible chaffing of the rope above, made the position anything but pleasant.

I was swinging between heaven and earth with a vengeance.

But, thank heaven! I was young, and bold, and active, and though I was tossed in empty space like an idle and unsubstantial feather, I retained my alertness of exertion and presence of mind; though taking care to keep off the rock, I steadied myself as much as possible with my feet. I certainly, however, felt dizzy.

Still I persevered, when suddenly, being near the end of my rope, I was startled to find myself at the mouth of a large and gloomy cave, from which there rushed, with a whirl and a wild twitter, some hundreds of small birds, which at a glance I recognized as the *Hirundo cucullata*.

I almost let go my hold, so much did this discovery move me. I was hungry and athirst, and here was one of the greatest deli-

cacies on earth within my immediate reach. Novel and strange as the thing was, I knew I had fallen on an article of commerce of extreme value, and which occupies a large amount of small shipping in all the islands adjacent to China, the more rocky and precipitous islands yielding the larger quantity.

The moment my eye fell upon these birds I knew them, and knew also that the cavern contained the better part of the treasure—the edible birds' nests. I had often read of these little birds, and indeed often seen them, but had never before fallen over their quarters. They might constantly be seen skimming about the surface of the sea near my home. In form and feather they look like a connecting link between the common swallow and the smallest of the petrel tribe—the Mother Cary's chicken, of which more anon—ever restless, ever in motion.

Sometimes you see them skim low to the edge of the water, as if they were taking up some substance with their bills from the surface of the waves; at other times they are beheld darting, turning and twisting in the air, as if they were in earnest and serious chase of fleet-winged insects. Yet it is asserted by all naturalists, and I can fully corroborate the statement, that the keenest can detect nothing upon which they really do feed.

The natives of the Archipelago, where they are chiefly found, assert that they feed upon insects and upon other minute creatures floating amid the scum of the surface of the sea; then, by some peculiar arrangement of the digestive organs, the bird, from its bill, produces the clear, glutinous and strange stuff of which the nest they build is constructed—an opinion in some manner fully corroborated by the singular appearance of the nest, which, when examined, resemble long filaments of very fine vermicelli, one part coiled over the other, without any regular system, and then glued together by transverse rows of the same material.

The shape of the nest is singular. They resemble somewhat the bowl of a gravestone split in half longitudinally, and in every way they are smaller than a swallow's nest. The little bird fixes the straight edge against the wall of rocks, in general selecting some dark and shady fissure in a cliff, or some cave high up in a cliff, or else where it is washed by the waves of the restless sea.

The only hypothesis which ever appeared satisfactory to me was that the strange swallow that is the architect of these nests is a night-bird, and that it never does really feed at all by day. Indeed, it rarely happens that any one has ever seen them, except in the early morn or late at night, or perhaps now and then in the deep shadow of some tall and overhanging cliff. They appear systematically to avoid the sunlight and the broad glare of day.

All this flashed across my mind as I hastily ascended my knotted rope, which I found safe above, but took care to make more secure against chafing by placing a lot of grass under the place where the pressure was most. My reason for my hasty ascent was twofold. I had seen near the top of the cliff the very thing I wanted. Hastily peeling off the bark of a tree of a resinous character, I manufactured a torch or two—good large torches, that would give powerful and glaring light. Then I cut a long pole, fastened my calabash to my side, and again descended, this time with less precaution than before. I soon stood upon a narrow ledge of rock, which led into the cave, whence issued odors, not of myrrh and frankincense, while a black, dreary, inky darkness pervaded the interior.

For this purpose I had made the torches, which were with great difficulty lit when beyond the reach of wind and daylight.

I thought I was in my serpent cave again, for no sooner did the torch blaze up than it was the signal for the most infernal din human tympanum was ever attacked with; the tiny chirp of the strange little swallows was taken up and multiplied a thousand times by the beautiful echoes of the cavern, while huge bats, big enough to be vampires, flew at my torch, not only being near putting my flickering torch out, but threatening to shove me off the narrow ledge into the dark, gloomy depths below.

At length, however, the din decreased, and I was able to look about me.

It was a low cavern where I stood, but evidently rising to a great height at no great distance. I could see the nests sticking to the roof, and soon, aided by my pole, got down as many as I could carry. Then casting my lighted torch down the rocks, I hastened to descend, and though in places I had to creep down where only a gull could have obtained a footing, at last the beach was reached.

The torch, still alight, had fallen under a tree, where at once I made a fire, and as soon as there was nothing but live coals left, placed thereon two coconut shells full of the nests, with a little water, much of which was to be found about in pools.

While waiting for my cookery to be finished, I sat down and smoked a pipe, thinking the while what a fortune might have been made could the contents of that cavern have been used to freight a schooner. The trade is a most lucrative one, and employs a large amount of labor and capital. But the loss of life from the trade is extraordinary large—still the high prices obtained cause labor never to be slack. It is said by old and experienced travelers that on an average two out of five men come to a vio-

lent deaths in the pursuit of this delicacy, which is sold at forty dollars a catty, or nine pounds sterling a pound and a quarter weight.

The peculiar value and choiceness of the nests depend upon their translucent whiteness and their utter freedom from feathers and dirt, the very best quality being of course those which have not been lined or used by the unfortunate swallow.

The fact is, these nests are nothing but a mass of pure gelatine. They have no taste, but boiled in coconut-milk are very nice. On this occasion about half an ounce of salt water had to be put into the soup to make it even palatable. But why the Chinese should take such unheard-of pains to procure them is a mystery, since they only use them with *bêche de mer*, shark fins, and other gelatinous substances, to thicken their soups and rich ragouts.

However this may be, they brought me to considerably, and I rose like a giant refreshed. Slinging my gun on my shoulder, I clutched the pole, and taking a hasty leave, by a glance, of my swinging lasso, plunged through the thicket which lined the shores of the bay to explore its mysterious precincts.

No sooner did my feet touch the soft and silvery sand of the beach, than, with a wild exclamation, I fell upon my knees, beside a long, thin and dark mass, jammed up between the rocks that had been heaved up by the upsurging earthquake.

It was—but my pen fails me, I must pause ere I record the awful discovery.

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THE VOYAGERS.

BY "LUSTRA."

From the depths of the Unknown,
From the bosom of the Throne,
All these countless millions come.

Launched out into childhood's sea,
Charged with joy and misery,
Struggling for supremacy.

Bearing in their childish eyes—
In their quaint though apt replies,
Great, unfathomable mysteries.

Onward come with youthful years,
Gaudier hopes and darker fears,
Interspersed with smiles and tears.

Gilding into fancy's realm,
With no hand to guide the helm,
Passions oftentimes overwhelm.

When life's labor doth begin,
Some to honor, some to sin,
Rapidly are ushered in.

Some will care for naught but pleasure,
Some will strive for worldly treasure,
Some seek glory in full measure.

Some will journey, ever singing,
Radiant hearts about them clinging,
Glorious fruits thus homeward bringing.

Some from their abundant store,
Will so help the sorrowing poor,
That they'll hunger nevermore.

Year by year will pass away,
Bringing age and slow decay,
Bringing locks of silver gray.

Then the shadows slowly lengthen,
Strangely then the pathway darken,
As with eager souls they hearken

To the rustlings in the air,
To the last adieu of care,
To the pastor's parting prayer.

To the whispering from the river,
To the heart's instinctive quiver,
To the voice, "I will deliver."

Then the soul, on angel's wing,
Seeks for life's eternal spring—
Seeks the new awakening.

Hears the greeting from the Throne,
"Oh, my child, well hast thou done;
To thy Father's Mansion come."

Wild Ned, the Boy Trapper.

OR,
LOST IN THE WILDERNESS.

BY CAPT. CHARLES HOWARD.

Yes, the settler's daughter was lost—lost in one of the great forests of Minnesota. She had shrieked at the top of her silvery voice; but no noise was borne to her ears, save the echoes of the sound.

Scarce an hour had elapsed since she left her father's humble cabin, to stroll in the forest that bounded his clearing, in which he was laboring so industriously with the ax.

In the wood, meandering a little stream of crystal water, and Lisa Greenwood wished to see its head. Therefore, she wandered along one of its banks until she was tired, and sat down to rest.

"I can not find the source of this brook," she murmured, as she rose to her feet. "It is undoubtedly a long way off. Therefore, I will give my self-imposed task up, and rejoin father among the brush."

She had not gone far until she found that she was lost. Every thing looked new to her; the trees seemed to have changed, and the little brook was not so clear as it had been a short time ago.

The further she journeyed the stranger objects seemed, and she began to call to her father, whom, she thought, was in hearing distance.

But John Greenwood continued to swing his ax, little thinking that his beloved child was lost, and thus doubly exposed to the dangers that infest a western forest.

At last Lisa grew weary with walking and threw herself upon the bank, scarcely expecting to see her father again.

"Do not go far into the wood, Lisa," he had cautioned her. "You know that it is full of wild beasts; and should you meet a red-skin you would not be safe, though they are at peace with the whites."

Lisa promised compliance to her father's wishes; but her ardor to find the source of the pearly stream, led her, with an irresistible influence, into the paths of disobedience.

For hours her rest beside the stream was not disturbed. She gazed upon the water which, many miles away, entered into the mighty Mississippi, and thought of her father, whose grief at her loss could be better imagined than described.

By and shadows gathered in that Minnesota forest, and the settler's daughter shuddered at the thought of spending a night among them. Yet she could see no other alternative, and quietly, meekly, she submitted to fate.

Suddenly a noise assailed her delicate ear. She started, for it was caused by a footstep. She clasped her hands and rose to her feet, while a smile of joy overspread her face. She thought that her father was near—that it was his step she had heard.

"Why does he not come directly to me?" she murmured. "But, perhaps, he can not find me. Father! father," she called, aloud, "I am here, dear father."

The next moment there was a rustling among the leaves, and a form sprang to her side.

"Pa—" the word was not completed, for, in the twilight, she recognized the man.

Then her lips parted to almost shriek a name.

"Stanley Johnson!"

She shrank from him as though his presence was pollution itself.

He folded his arms upon his breast, and smiled sardonically.

"As you have recognized me, Miss Greenwood," he said, in a bitter voice, "an introduction is useless. We were friends once, I believe, and why can we not renew that friendship now?"

"It may be renewed upon one condition," said Lisa, in a voice that told that it was distasteful to her to converse with the newcomer.

"Please name the condition, Miss Greenwood," he said, in a supplicious air.

"It is simply this: that you guide me to my humble home, for I am lost."

The light of Lisa's triumph burned in Stanley Johnson's dark orbs, and he cried:

"And will you become mine, then?"

"Yours? never!" cried Lisa, shuddering from the feeling of detestation that crept to her heart.

"A long time ago, Stanley Johnson, I told you I would never wed one whose hands are stained with fratricidal blood. I shall not forswear the promise. I loved your brother Lincoln, I do not hesitate to tell you now; but jealousy, the destroying fiend, took possession of the holy citadel of

your heart, and you slew him. Then you came to me with hands crimson with a brother's gore, and asked me to become your wife; to be deserted when passion's fitful fire went out."

Stanley Johnson quivered with smothered rage, while the brave girl was speaking; and when she finished, he clutched her arm with a demon's grip.

"You will not become my wife if I take you to your father?" he shouted.

"No! Stanley Johnson, I would rather be an Indian's squaw."

"When you left St. Paul," he said, choking the volleys of oaths that rose in his throat. "I took a terrible oath that you should be mine despite your declarations. I have followed you, and from this forest I have often watched you in the clearing with your father. A while ago I came upon your trail, and followed it until I found you. I live a short distance from this spot, all alone in a cabin. You shall share it with me, though no minister ever unite us. My oaths are fulfilled at last, Lisa Greenwood; you are mine till death doth us part."

He fairly shrieked the last triumphant sentence, and seized her in his arms.

"A kiss," he cried, "to celebrate the fulfillment of my vows, and then away to the wedding-feast."

He was drawing her to him, to stain her cheeks with a polluted kiss, when the report of a rifle echoed through the wood.

Stanley Johnson released the maiden, clapped his hands to his temples, and staggered backward.

"Shot!" he cried. "My God, I'm shot. Curse my murderer! curse—" He had touched the ground now, and lay motionless, dead!

Lisa recovered her self-possession to see a boyish form standing over the dead.

In the twilight his habiliments and features were easily discernible.

He was about five feet in height, and possessed a remarkably intelligent countenance.

His hair was dark as the raven's plumage, and fell over his shoulders. A coonskin cap, ornamented with feathers, sat jauntily upon his head, and his clothes were of the ordinary material, usually worn by settlers of the present day. His wife was longer than himself.

"How can I ever repay you, noble boy, for saving me?" said Lisa, stepping forward and touching her preserver's shoulder.

He looked up, but did not seem to have understood her.

She was clad in the proper habiliments of her sex, and upon her head sat a beautiful fox-squirrel looking down into her face. Near her a large beaver was very complacently gnawing a stick.

"This is my family," said the trapper, in a low voice, for their rather sudden appearance had not disturbed the inmates of the cabin. "And quite a happy family it is, too. A dying Pawnee committed Bright Eye to my care a year ago, and I love her as I would a sister. You must become acquainted with her to know her. She loves me, and continually calls me Wild Ned. I call myself that, too, sometimes. My squirrel's name is Wippie, and my beaver's Wattie. Now, what do you think of my family?"

Lisa expressed herself pleased with it, and then Wild Ned smiled and spoke to the Pawnee.

She sprang to her feet with a cry of joy, and threw herself into his arms. Wippie did not desert his perch, but uttered a pleasant cry and shook one of his little paws at his master. The beaver came to his master's feet, and playfully bit the strings of his moccasins.

Bright Eye soon made friends with Lisa, and the settler's daughter found in her a most agreeable little companion. She quickly prepared a supper for Lisa, whom she persisted in calling Fair Face, and an hour later the two girls were asleep behind a curtain of skins.

With the dawn of another day Wild Ned and the settler's daughter left the cabin, leaving Bright Eye to play with her pets.

For a long while they traversed the forest, when the boy-trapper suddenly exclaimed:

"Look there, miss. Is that not your father?"

Lisa looked in the direction the finger described, and a cry of joy burst from her throat.

"Father!"

The settler heard the cry, and his daughter's head was soon pillowed upon his bosom. He was overjoyed at finding his child, who, in a few words, related her adventures.

"Noble boy!" cried the parent, grasping Wild Ned's hand. "I can never repay you. Can I not do something for you? Will you not come to our house and make it your home?"

Wild Ned's head sunk upon his breast, and for a moment the current of his thoughts, like still waters, ran deep.

"And leave Bright Eye, Wippie and Wattie?" he innocently asked, as he raised his head.



WILD NED, THE BOY TRAPPER.

"Wasn't that a good shot, miss?" he inquired. "It did look dangerous to shoot when his face was so close to yours. But, my gun never misses, and I was sure of killing him. He is the first man I have ever killed, and I do not want to kill another. But, say, miss, who is he? I believe I have seen him in St. Paul."

"It is quite probable," answered Lisa. "He lived there. His name is Stanley Johnson."

"Didn't he hate his brother because a girl loved him?"

"Yes, and he killed him."

"That must have happened after I left the city. You see I ran off from home when I was fifteen, to become a trapper. I am sixteen now and past, and I think I know about as many trapping tricks as the best of them."

Then the settler's daughter thanked him for preserving her honor, and beseeched him to guide her to her father's house; but all to no purpose.

"I know right where your father's house is," he said, smiling, "for I have seen it a hundred times. But you must sleep in my little cabin to-night. I want you to see it, and my little girl, too."

"Your little girl?" echoed Lisa, surprised, and again the boy-trapper smiled.

"Yes, my little Indian girl. Folks in St. Paul would say 'protégée,' but away out here there is no use for high-flown words. She is really pretty, my little girl. I'll let you sleep with her to-night. Come; to-morrow you shall see your father."

Lisa could do nothing but obey; but it cost her a pang when she thought of an agonized father, who doubtless believed his beloved and only daughter dead.

"I'll bury Johnson to-morrow, though he scarcely deserves the service," said the young trapper, casting a look at the pale-faced fratricide, as he and Lisa turned away.

In a short time the boy paused, and directly before her, beyond a half-screened doorway, Lisa saw a fire.

"This is my house," whispered the boy, with a scarcely audible chuckle. "I wonder what Bright Eye is doing?"

The next moment he had pulled the screen of skins aside, and Lisa found herself standing at his side beyond the threshold, and gazing upon a strange sight.

A fire, almost at their very feet, lit up the rude interior of the small cabin, and bathed several grotesque objects in a flood of light.

Beyond the fire, and near a rude table, sat an Indian girl about nine years of age.

"No; let them accompany you. They will be very welcome," said Mr. Greenwood. "Then I will come," said the boy; and the next day his cabin was tenanted.

As the days wore away it was astonishing to see how rapidly Wild Ned grew to manhood.

Throwing aside his backwoods habits, he worked industriously at the side of Mr. Greenwood, and in due time, developed into a handsome, hardy man.

Lisa was but a single year his senior; and John Greenwood noticed that she was quite fond of his protégée's company.

"I guess I will go and see my parents," said Ned, one day, to the settler. "I would like to take Lisa with me, and bring you back a son-in-law."

John Greenwood did not start at the words. I believe he half expected them, for he merely said:

"Take her, Ned, and may the good Lord smile upon your union."

Ned Starling found his aged parents, who generously forgave him, and took his bride to their hearts.

He left them the beautiful Pawnee, Bright Eye, who is developing into an accomplished dusky beauty, and who will, within a year, be led to the altar by a young merchant of St. Paul.

The land cleared by John Greenwood is now a thriving town, of which Mr. Starling, once Wild Ned, the Boy Trapper, is the chief municipal officer.

Camp-Fire Yarns.

How Seth Davis Lost his Nose.

"WELL, you see, boyes," said Seth Davis, an old trapper, grim, grizzled and gray, to a lot of fellows that lay around the camp-fire—"you see that the thing ar' wantin', don't ee?" and he placed his long forefinger upon the spot where a nose ought to have been, but where it wasn't.

The organ had been cut off smooth with the face, leaving only a portion of the "bridge," and two small orifices that gave the man's countenance a truly horrible appearance, suggestive of some terrible tragedy.

A loud laugh greeted the remark, and the trapper continued, while his small gray eyes flashed and his brow wrinkled under the recollection:

"Yes, it ar' gone, an' no mistake, but I reckon they'd hev best left Seth Davis's nose alone."

"Tell us about it, old hoss!"

"Well, I had been up among the Wind River hills thet winter, an' hed cached a fine lot o' pelts ready fur movin' into the fort when I was through, when one night a lot uv Crows, under Black Dog, kim down on me an' routed ther camp."

"I took to the gullies an' lay off a watch-in' the varmints while they robbed the cache, on'll I couldn't hold in no longer, an' crept up an' drapped one o' the imps in his tracks. It war a risky business, an' turned out bad, fur the whole pack took out arter me an' run me to ground in less'n a mile."

"I tell you they war a mad lot, an' it war as much as Black Dog could do to keep 'em from liftin' my har' on the spot. He told 'em I would keep, an' look fast-rate roped up to a saplin' with a lot o' dry timber piled permiscuous 'round. They thort so, too, an' next mornin' we started fur the village across the range."

"Thet afternoon I run the gauntlet, an' war chopped up powerful, but I made the war-post, an' so got off fur thet day, anyhow. Three days arter I hed run, the council said as how I had to burn, thar not bein' any widened squaws around thet would take me fur better nor wuss. I guess they thort, from the looks o' me, it would be mostly wuss, an' so kept shy."

"As they took me from the council-house to the stake, I seed at once thet if I war agoin' back to Bent's, I hed better be startin'. An' start I did."

"Half way across the open I floored the Injun on my right, an' gruppued the tomahawk outer the other's belt, an' he went under fur good an' all."

"It war done quick, an' I got a hefty start uv the balance, an' made fur the hills. Twice ther best runners kim up with me, an' I finished both o' 'em, but the others kept a-crowdin' me wuss'n a pack o' coyotes around a crippled buffer."

"I warn't in good condition, an' I thort the game war up, but I kept makin' fur the hills, an' at last got thar."

"All but three uv the imps hed knocked off, but these fellers meant mischief, an' I know'd it."

"I war runnin' along the skirts uv a cliff, on a path thet warn't a hundred yards wide, by a good deal, an' a-lookin' back to see how things war, when, all of a suddint, over I went into a gully thet crossed the trail. After I hed time to look around an' see what I war, I heard the patter o' the imps' feet, an'

reckin they'd hev best left Seth Davis's nose alone."

"Well, I had been up among the Wind River hills thet winter, an' hed cached a fine lot o' pelts ready fur movin' into the fort when I was through, when one night a lot uv Crows, under Black Dog, kim down on me an' routed ther camp."

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MY RIVAL.

BY JOE JOE, JR.

He lived beyond the bay below,
In that old house that fronts the bay,
Whose olden open portico
Continues still to look this way;

My senior by one year alone—
Yet, though the difference was not great,
It showed the littleness of my own—
The greatness of his high estate.

In nameless dread my mind he kept,
And poured the wormwood and the gall,
And even while I lay and slept,
Haunted me sadder than than all.

And oh, as by her side he stood,
Or strove to please her simplest whim,
While deeply burned my jealous blood,
My fingers ached to throttle him.

His acts seemed nobler than my own,
The manliness that he possessed,
The frank good nature he had shown
In many things at her request.

His walk, his talk, his prideless dress,
His little faults, if they might be,
All seemed so very marvelous,
I wondered why she thought of me.

I doubted if she could be mine;
I somehow could not feel secure,
And thought I sometimes saw the sign
That told our love could not endure.

I told my fears, and she was shy,
Recalled the pledges till she wept;
I sallied forth and blacked his eyes,
And ever since my fears have slept.

Beat Time's Notes.

I was on board a ship lately in a great storm. The captain could do nothing, so he gave me his place, saying if the ship was saved it would be solely through my wonderful skill. I first ordered all hands out of pockets and on deck. Piped all hands by giving them pipes; unreefed the rudder, and ordered the capstan to be furled. Here the ship righted, but soon another starboarded stiff gale, blowing from the leeward, struck her on the keel, and she immediately lifted. Things began to look squally; saw the ship was very apt to settle, on land several miles under the sea, and entirely removed from the markets. I thought a bottle of bay rum, which was on one side of the ship, was the cause of her leaning so, and went and drank it, because I feared that way too. Ordered the main-mast taken down, rolled up and put in the locker. Ordered a wave to sweep the deck, as it was not very clean; nailed the anchor to the mast; lashed the man at the wheel like a blaze; cut short the gunwall; ordered the chambermaid to change the main sheets; commanded the halyards to be raked, and the steel yards to be weighed. The ship by this time was rolling over at the rate of a mile a minute, so I ordered the ballast to be thrown over, and the ship to be greased, so she would roll easier; sent the mate below and the crew into the loft, and with the assistance of Union Jack, I brought the ship into the sally-port with a dexterity which one never sees.

THE latest thing out is the combination piano. It plays of its own accord any piece of music which is set before it, forward or backward, or will take up off-hand any tune which is once whistled to it. As it never stops, it will be an especial blessing to quiet lodgers over the way. The legs are very pliant, and will dance to any tune, however intricate the steps. It is designed for the benefit of industrious and fashionable young ladies, as it gives them more time to sleep.

WITHOUT doubt, the best thing for the itch is a soothing application of the finger-nails. I want it understood, however, that I don't speak from experience.

A BROKEN head is not what it is cracked up to be.

A NOVELIST friend of mine is called the "dickens" in America.

WARM lovers are generally ardent spirits.

WOULD it be the height of propriety to call a writer of odes an odious poet?

HALF the miseries of humanity are occasioned by constantly brooding over them. If a man with his neck broke, and not otherwise seriously injured, would not let it lie on his mind, he would experience but little inconvenience.

SHOULD some power just now turn us suddenly into statues as the military phrase expresses it, "as you are," would it not be a strain on arithmetic to tell how many of us would be found with hand in our employer's till, putting an extra pound of sugar down on somebody's account, defrauding the orphan, cheating our neighbor, or stealing his chickens? I make bold to ask this question, for just now I am out of employment, and am not at all rich.

If the present time is money, past time is equally so, because it is a far-thing.

THE question has often been asked, "Why is it that men wear crapes on their plug hats?" I would answer that it is worn as a visible token of invisible sorrow; used also too often to express "I'm a widower." Here's another change, "Who's next?" I am familiarly acquainted with several men, decidedly married, who are extremely anxious to have their hat-bands widened.

A WRITER is condemned to pen-al servitude.

I HOLD in my hand a copper cent of 1840, of which I am the sole owner and proprietor—at present, at least. You would get more copper those days for a cent than you can now. How often has this been spent? It has bought hundreds of dollars' worth in its time. How many visions of how many striped sticks of candy has it produced. How often has it been the solitary occupant of a depleted pocket, and cheered the possessor with the royal idea that he wasn't entirely strapped! How often has it been hardly pinched as the contribution-plate went round in a moment of indecision, and then been replaced in the pocket? How often has it been flapped at heads or tails, for "who pays?" What an omnipotent mover in the world has it been! How have the people toiled, struggled, and some of them swindled, to get possession of it! Oh, thou little component part of a dollar, even my own eyes can not consider thee little. Thou art always at life-size. Oh, that I had a basketful of you—wouldn't I make a jingle! But, as I haven't got that many, I would be content if I had the assistance of four more to get a glass of beer. 'Tis said, "Silence always gives a cent." I'll apply to her.

Cent-imentally, BEAT TIME.